THE POETRY REVIEW

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OPEN LETTER TO THE READER

Fortieth Anniversary Year,
March, 1949.

Sir, or Madam,

In this, the second of our three celebrative Anniversary numbers, the editorial policy of providing something of an anthology representing a cross-section of the latest verse by recognized poets of the last forty years has been maintained and, we dare to believe, both extended and strengthened.

The first President of the Poetry Society, Lady Margaret Sackville, returns to the pages of *The Poetry Review*, as do such long-standing contributors as Lord Dunsany, Mr. Wilfrid Thorley and Mr. Herbert Read; and we are honoured by the opportunity of publishing a notable new poem by the late Lord Derwent, received from him a bare fortnight before his lamented death in mid-January last.

But, apart from these fore-runners in our amaranth field, and those more recently appearing there, such as Mr. Stanley Snaith, Mr. Alan Rook, and Mr. Roy Campbell, we have also a score of new Torch-bearers, all known by fame and deed, who accept our hospitality.

It might even seem that a phrase in the last editorial might have attracted them:

> "*Poetry* is welcome, of all types, from all ages, and both sexes, providing it attains a high standard."

Certainly we are the richer for their arrival, and most grateful.

In forty years there have been many changes in poetry. "Too many," age may grumble; "Not enough," youth may quarrel. But with Time rectifying the balance of all reputations inevitably, who dare complain? The ideal of any editor of catholic taste is to forestall Time, and our intention is to let our taste be as wide as "good taste" will allow. One cannot cave a wind — it "bloweth where it listeth"—and the path of narrowness is now the real path to destruction. Our forty years have been years of a certain emancipation we must recognize, else we might stupidly censure—to illustrate from this number—the late Lord Derwent for his notation on a physiological event, Mr. Cameron for admirably and faithfully translating Rimbaud's youthful opinions, the irrepressible Mr. Frank O'Connor for his realist balancing (in one refrain) on the edge of blasphemy, and Mr. Roy Campbell for his Torero criticism.

Now, and we may thank God and the late Havelock Ellis and Mrs. Pankhurst, it is hoped we can (since to-day we may read Elizabethans without Thomas Bowdler) allow some licence to the fluent pen, and see it in the light of a syringe injecting blood into the very veins of verse.

Mr. Philip Lindsay, who has dealt in his histories so proudly with our Plantagenets, trenchently with our Tudors and sauvely with our Stuarts, comes like another blood infusion to jerk us up to attention of the problems that have faced his, and our, Australian poets. Indeed, his article might suggest to us that if we are to have a new Renaissance in verse it must be a virile one, and that the virile tongue if at times virulent is not, of necessity, vile. Generalising widely, from 1909 to 1914, it might be said that our poets were poetising, from 1915 to 1920 suffering, from 1921 to 1929 reflecting, from 1930 to 1939 experimenting, and in the last ten years decaying. If that be so, then the general rot has gone far enough, and we may now legitimately expect a new flowering from the compost.

Take poetry to be a garden: flowers are surely radically individual? They can be cross-bred by the intellectual cunning of man, and frequently are; or, again, they may become the victims of accident. If they were possessed of any intention, they would probably choose to be themselves. And to a similar ruling of nature, it would seem, true poets adhere. Tennyson is as like Keats as a Lily is like a Rose, but not more so. A pair are poets, a pair are flowers; only in the texture of the verse, or the petal, do they disclose any relationship.

In the fourth issue this year, *Younger Poets of To-day* (a title unashamedly borrowed from that great editor, Sir John Squire), which will appear in early August, it is desired that this admirable quality of individualism and personal poetic integrity will be peculiarly apparent. One purpose of the Poetry Society is to "discover" poets, one allied purpose of *The Poetry Review* is to publicise their discovery, as will be remembered when the verse-books of the Scots miner-lyricist. Robert Crawford, and the early critical essays of Michael Roberts, but lately deceased, are recalled.

But this button-holing of you, reader, must cease (even if it be preferable to pontification), cease immediately!

Sir, or Madam,

I remain, etc.,

Yours,

JOHN GAWSWORTH.

SHUBRA

Les roses de Shubra—c'est tout dire en Egypte . . . Gérard de Nerval.

THE LATE LORD DERWENT

Where the assassins of midday, the ebony arches,
The sycamores' ultramarine
Let the left Nile, the right desert glow through, now there parches
The dust of the fellaheen.

Useless to dream of the tumid year's prodigal dangling
Of oranges, masked and aligned,
And, paler than planets, of lemons beset with the wrangling
Of birds in the frondage behind;

Rutilant globes of perfume in their framing obscurity,
You left them to drop on the dim
Watered benevolent grooves of old Egypt's impurity,
Bostandjis of Ibrahim,

So that the lovers and laughers might stoop, and their gazes
Be led past the emerald flails
Of banana trees, cypresses building Italian mazes,
To where the heart almost fails

At the sight—see, extravagant, insolent, indolent, sumptuous,
Played on with tremulous hoses,
Pink, red and ivory gleam the reposing, presumptuous
Pacha's tumultuous roses!

Now, neither frivolous palace, with sea battles raging
In delicate fresco around
And aviaries, boudoirs and baths, nor the artful, engaging
Fruit procession is found:

Nothing of all that intoxicant amber of million
Queen blossoms, nothing remains;
Now there press close to the single, surviving pavilion
The brown fellah's sugar-canes.

Here, then, we sit, with Byzantium's counterfeit pillars
  Propping the long, lazy roof,
And below between marble of tortoise and crocodile, killers
  Of time, the fish ply their woof;

And ever and ever from out of the dazzle come rending
  The haunted and motionless air
Curlews that as they arrive utter oh! that descending
  Cry of chromatic despair.

There in the shade the expressionless guardian shuffles
  His slippers, advancing to show
Corners of intimate chambers, whose floor even muffles
  Our own vulgar steps, in the snow

Of sun-sprinkled dust. Here, as twilight's delphinium magic
  Brought to the patient divan
The beast with two backs, the plump houris learned, smiling, how
    tragic
  The strength and frailty of man;

Forgot it in chatter and coffee and hand-mirrors, flowered
  With simpler designs than their own.
Oh, long ago these adorable hypocrites dowered
  Earth with their elegant bone.

Swoop, my Egyptian curlews; for yours is the scenic
  Pool, where the dinghy of gold
Once carried Pacha and favourites round, his Hellenic
  Victories told and re-told;

Yours and the charwoman kites, with their marvellous planing,
  Azure to azure, then down;
Yours, while the ancient black peasantry dig the containing
  Paths to prolific brown.

Look, we trespassers cannot derange the possession;
  Three from the world outside,
Hoping for peace, but dragging our sombre obsession,
  Like the train of an unwilling bride,

Here to this agate opacity, weed, mud and quiet
  Broad in the casual sun;
Seeming eternities, Nature's inaudible riot,
  Beauty and ugliness one

In the soft wastage, impervious Earth Mother's twining
Of animal, chemical days.
Would we not joyfully melt our monotonous pining
In this monotonous haze!

No. Though the globe split in two, though a taciturn God
Blench not before our endurance,
Rose of the Empire and Nubian turning the sod
Meet somehow in reassurance,

Loveliness guilty, love guiltless composing; the gardens
Of ghosts whisper: "Oh, not alone
Are you the hurricane's prey; and adversity hardens
Your hearts, but to marble, not stone."

BY THE UMGENI RIVER

LORD DUNSANY

Where the Umgeni river glides and crawls,
Lazily, sleepily, beside the gleam
Of listless flowers, in idle ease, the stream
Comes to the Howick falls.

And so Man's blood flows sometimes through calm veins
Of happy peoples, when their only care
Is to tend well the earth that all men share,
Tilling contented plains.

Sometimes his blood pours out tumultuously
From myriad wounds, as the Umgeni's flow
Roars from its calm above to calm below.
In such a time live we.

THE TREASURES OF THE CASTAWAY

E. H. VISIAK

The island of the castaway
Had headlands grim as death's heads grey,
And lank he was, and gaunt as they.

Lizard-long and lank he was,
Grown upon with hair as grass;
Wild his visage, wanton, meagre,
Bushed with beard. His waned eyes, eager,
Gleamed and glimmered in their sockets;
Lurid gems in leathern lockets.

In his cell of bleachèd bone,
Timber wrack, and lava stone,
I saw on the matted mud,
Rubies red as gouts of blood;
Ruddy beads that smouldered gay
As, in the firelight, squatted splay,
He rolled them to and fro at play.

When his light of joy goes null,
He stows them in a shipmate's skull.
Homewards then on dreamful ocean,
Swaying with a mazy motion,
He goes roving while his glee
Hoards up gems of memory

In his own skull, till his eyes
Darken deep and hollow-wise,
And squats he down again to play,
Then store his gaudy gems away,
Falling off in blissful measures,
Dream-full of his other treasures.

TO KNOW AND NOT TO FEEL

R. C. TREVELYAN

The beauty of the trees allured me.
I entered the wood, which took me to itself
And showed me its lofty colonnades and domes,
Its bowers and lairs and secrecies.
On and on I wandered down green pathways
Through a myriad bluebells spreading far and far.
Slant rays of evening light pierced the branches
Wakening to life and colour leaf and flower.
The beauty of earth seemed to be one with me;
And tranquil was my heart, without a care.

Time passed; and once more
With the same lure the woods invited me.
But there was a change, not in outward things,
But in myself. Too well I knew that all
This loveliness had been delightful to me,
And should have been so still.
It was not Nature, nor my senses, that had failed me.
What misery can be greater than to know and not to feel?

THE REED

WILFRID THORLEY

I am the reed the waters lap,
The reed that suddenly will snap
Under a bird's weight that betimes
Rides on me as the ripple rhymes
Beneath him. Now a flute, I'm blown
By human lips that have not known
The melody which through my stem
Ran ere I was kist by them.
So they believe themselves have bound
The links into a chain of sound
That makes for heart-ease like the flow
Of waters underneath the glow
Of moonrise or a clouded sun,
Laughing as in the light they run.

NEWTON

SIR SHANE LESLIE, Bt.

Immortal in the Light, whose Laws his mind set clear,
Mortal, the Gravity of Earth retains him here.

SONG DEFLECTED

LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE

Rivers of earthly song which flow towards
The bright expanse of green celestial swards,
How is your course deflected, how misled
Into dull by-ways whence all dream has fled
And only barren waters stagnant lie
Beneath the pallor of a Winter sky?
O! leaping springs whose source eternal lies
In glades of Angel-guarded Paradise,
What faith shall shield your innocence and keep
Your brave, pellucid waters from these deep
Treacherous pools, which leafless trees surround,
Wherein, like birds, your living words are drowned?

A MEETING

FRANCES CORNFORD

Who has not seen their lover
Walking at ease,
With usual feet that cover
A pavement under trees;
Not singular, apart,
But featured, footed, dressed,
Approaching like the rest,
In the same dapple of the summer caught;
And thought:
There comes my heart.

THE WORD

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Let there be life!
In the tiger heart of the sun,
Wreathed in eternal fire the first and the last secret,
The ineluctable word thrust there by the Absolute One
That none may comprehend.

Flash of that formula is in the leopard,
In the lion's leap, in the high-curving swell
And swift propulsion of the snake,
In the veins of roses, in branch and bough,
The close embrace of lovers and the nun's rapt vow;
In the lovewarm eyes of dogs, in dolphins riding
See-saw the racing tide, in gulls and mallards,
Ants and elephants and honey-gathering bees;
In the decisions of airmen and politicians;
In the sun upon the sea subsiding,
In the antics of clowns and grins of dullards,
In the clamour and concentration of schools,
In the statesmen ponderous upon their missions;
In the cricketer's leap and the murderer's thrust,
In the tense attitudes of lust
And all the slow surrenders of delight;
In divers leaden in a noonday night;
In the animalcula of woods and seas,
Cities and rock pools;
In all the multitudinous things that take
Pride and sorrow in movement, in sight and sound and smell:
There, deep hid in the sun, is the Word.

System of substances, wild-pounding force
Which none may stem or label in its course;
Organic blind enigma from time's womb,
Hurtling in lightning, billowing in the cloud,
How shall men name you, though they cry aloud
From birth unto the tomb?

Dynamic equilibrium
In a polyphasic system
Of molecule and atom,
Of positron and mesotron
And guesswork neutron?
How shall we claim you,
Aim you and name you?

We cannot isolate you; I may not spell
The fluid miracle
That penetrates me as a burning sword,
That dwells within and moulds me,
In pain and beauty folds me,
My vesture and my shield.

I was an embryo and you were there within,
Fishtail and fin and stumped antennae waving.
Around me and about
You wove my flesh and gave me lustral laving.

Your impulse made me win
Into the living light to shout
Unthinking and instinctive praise.
You were my hours and days,
The charge of anger in me and the smile,
The urge of matter and the warning pain,
The strong informing guile
In heart and brain.
You give me energy, you grant me rest;
Shallow and deep you animate and calm;
I lie upon you and you are my breast;
I sing and in my singing is your psalm.
Life so abundant, life that in me lives
In semblance tangible,
In use discernible,
Yet, when I would define you, like a ghost
Of vain accost,
Elusive as the moonray that deceives
In shadowed spray of leaves
Or where the torn sea heaves.

Life, I would have you in my keeping
As I in yours waking and sleeping,
Alert in blood to hold you like a shield
And in your strength be held,
A jewelled buckler and a flashing sword,
My servant and my lord.

Blood flows within me, tissues shape
As in the worm, the fish, the ape.
For what is man?—the ape, the fish,
The worm, the ages' flux in form,
Shaped to that absolute first wish
In protogenic swarm.

The biologist with his test-tubes
Guesses as I am guessing;
He advances but he is not progressing.
His lungs fill, as the dinosaur
Breathed also to the last assault and fell.

His nerves are tense with codes and tell
What moves the handle on the door,
How springs the lamp to light and why
The clouds move royal in the sky.
But what the animating power
That makes the pistil seed the flower;
What makes the comet and the panther leap
And sleeping mind its vigil keep—
The universal principle—he knows
No more than how to make a rose.

I eat you, life; you make me living eat.
I pluck you from the earth and from the sea.
You are all patterns that all forms repeat,
The countless sum of all totality,
Constituent and the whole
Of body, mind and soul.

I love and I engender, grow and fade,
My body is proud and my soul quick and aware;
I walk on the living leaves dead in the glade
And feel the wild systems aswirl in the air.
One lives in me, in them, and when
My lone illusion lifts and fires
Then my least act in time acquires
Identity with a plan.
Then am I empty of my blind desires,
I see life's purpose as a star to scan,
My soul charged with significance,
Not a stray vessel of molecular chance.

Hung with bright worlds the roof of night
Folds all horizons in its span;
I gaze, and wince before the sight,
Stunned by the littleness of Man.

Not systems of atomic scope
Mocking the sieve of steel and fire
Explain the impulse that is hope,
The energy that is desire.

Time is a dream, but as we gaze
Beyond the rims of conscious mind
A faith is fashioned for our praise,
A duty to our days assigned.

We feel a Principle, a Plan
By which the molecules are swirled;
Ours is the mystery of Man
Within the mystery of the world.

We shall not know that hidden rune
In the sun's tiger heart nor guess
What prompts the universal tune
From nothingness to nothingness.

Ours the dilemma and the dream,
To feel our souls in time erect,
Yet lured by bidding of a gleam
To circle round the intellect.

Our mortal days we spend beneath
An arch of splendour and dark fear;
What is the other side of death
We may not see and cannot hear.

Life, I would have you in my keeping
As I in yours waking and sleeping,
Alert in blood to hold you like a shield
And in your strength be held,
A jewelled buckler and a flashing sword,
My servant and my lord.

AN OLD WOMAN

SYLVIA LYND

No one remembers now, not one,
The hair that like a primrose shone,
The step as light, the voice as merry
As all the birds of February.
Oh, never more immured in trunk of pine
Was spirit captive held, than I in mine!

Though through the cleft may entrance find
Delight of sound and sight and mind,
Sunshine and moonshine, flower and friend and wit,
And Springtime's tumult and the joy of it
To be that Springtime's part I cannot know,
Or outwit Sycorax with Prospero.

"ONE CANNOT LIVE LONG WITHOUT DELIGHT"

VIOLA MEYNELL

If from a despairing suitor it were heard
Or from a girl dreaming of embraces
It would not be their last word,
Life would lead them to new places,
Something somewhere they would seek and hold.

But if it is said by a man in years old,
Not used to moan, stern, harsh at need, upright,
A mighty spirit—a different thing is proved.

He does not mean only: "No life without being loved,"
But still more: "Without loving one cannot have life."
He may have a son, kind, out of sight,
A daughter wishing him well, even a wife
Relapsed into unaware separation.

But he speaks from the stark ultimate desolation
That about him lies.
"One cannot live long without delight,"
His terrific heart says, and he dies.

LULLABY

THE DUCHESS OF WELLINGTON
(Dorothy Wellesley)

Sing lullaby as mothers do,
To men who nowise can forget,—
Thou knowest well the sound thereof.
Beneath a falling star the true
Birth of a fatal love is set;
It hung erstwhile a time above.

Sing lullaby as mothers do,
Sing lullaby, my dear.
Yet if the living are not true,
A woman's heart gives sometimes boon,
If even as only wantons croon,
Like to the wanton Magdalen.

Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,
Sing lullaby, my dear . . .

TO A HEDGEHOG

GERALD BULLETT

And did the unwonted sun
  This winter morning,
Illusionary glow
  Of spring's returning,

Did the sun's quickness
  So stir your blood,
From shadowy hedge and green verge
  You needs must seek the road?

My two hands lifted you,
  You bequilled and curled
Into the brown semblance
  Of a prickly world.

My two hands turned you over,
  My curious eyes
Stared at the strange secret
  They could not surprise,

Stared at the sharp beseeching face,
  The red mouth mute,
Marvelling that one so midget-small
  Should wear so huge a coat,

Or, having put it on,
  Should through the centuries
Have learned alas so little
  The logic of disguise

As here to wander
  In sight of all who pass,
Far from confusing cover
  Or tall obscuring grass.

Dim is your light, traveller,
  Your goal obscure,
And that which glows and knows in me
  Tells me no more

Than that we travel the same road,
  Units of soul and sense,
I with dim foreguessing,
  You in innocence.

Strangers and brothers, hedgehog,
  We stare, you and I.
Strangers and fellow-pilgrims,
  We live, and we die.
And neither you nor I know what we are,
  Or whence, or why.

THE RAVEN

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

As rivers through the plain
Widen and turn not back again
Descending man forgot
The ark on Ararat.

Grounded before the gale,
Its swarthy timbers split and failed.
Its voyaging profile was
Blunted with vines and moss;

And emptied of all the prayers
Hymns and Te Deums of its passengers
No voice remained in it
But Noah's old she-cat

Praising her spotted young;
Till long years later came a long
Slow wing-beat through the dark
And closed upon the ark.

Presently, there spoke
The raven, dying: Out, alack!
News of Elysium
I bring—but they are gone.

THE WELL OF LIFE

HERBERT READ

The waters of the well of life
Lie deep on a rocky bed:
They are not fetched from running streams
But drawn at the well-head.

The red-haired wives stand there
(Each has a lover):
One turns the wailing windlass
The other bends over

And dips a scoop into the well
To fill the pitcher at her side:
The clouds are ghostly passengers
That on the stilled water ride.

The rooks are croaking in the elms
And men in the field labour.
God will bless the wives and their strong
Men's endeavour.

PROGRESS *

F. L. LUCAS

Like summer lightning,
  Across the night
The cloudwrack kindles,
  Livid-white.

Through the black zenith
  From the east
Whines the rush
  Of a questing beast—

A wingéd hound
  On its trail of death,
For blood so thirsting
  That its breath

* *On the Amiens front in the 1914 War shell-craters are said to have uncovered flint weapons of the Palæolithic age.*

Sucks through its teeth,
  As shrieks a gale.
Then a flash that turns
  The darkness pale;

A shock that sets
  Earth shuddering,
As a horse that feels
  The gadfly's sting;

A rending as of
  The tented Heaven
From skirt to skirt
  In sunder riven.

More black than the black
  Of midnight's pall,
Its smoke stands pillared,
  A giant puff-ball;

Then back the silence
  Floods once more
By poplared road
  And river-shore,

Where Somme laps onward
  Tranquilly
Towards Abbeville
  And the Narrow Sea.

But when on Amiens'
  Topmost vane
Dawn in the distance
  Struck again,

Under the morning's
  First red gleam
A gaunt pit gaped
  Above the stream;

Deep in the heart
  Of its dull-red clay
Blackened powder
  And steel shards lay—

And yet they lay there
  Not alone;
With them, a fragment
  Of jagged stone.

The sun of dawning
  Softly played
With the blue flint-edge
  Of an ancient blade,

That last he had looked on
  At dusk one day
Many a thousand
  Years away.

Long before Eve
  Had suckled Cain,
Shouted the slayer
  Above the slain;

Already Man whetted
  His tools to kill—
Time has but taught him
  Surer skill.

Still, as of old,
  Man's blood flows red;
Salt, as of old,
  The tears men shed;

Life has not changed
  The limbs that feel:
But Death has bettered
  Flint with steel.

So Man devises,
  As years go by,
Better and better
  Ways to die.

THE STILL FOUNTAINS

L. AARONSON

When fountains cease, their sources dream their playing,
Proved perfect in melodious memory,
As lovers in the silence of their saying
Make air the accent of all poetry.

When fountains cease because the summer's over,
Grave waters gather round the hidden root,
And there they lean till nightfall can discover
Light's quintessential summer absolute.

And there they lean to learn their summer's meaning,
Distilled from every mortal, mournful gleam,
And see their faces over water leaning,
Mirror to mirror infinite in dream.

BEAUTY'S WARS

LOUIS GOLDING

If Beauty scorch us like a fire,
  We do but fan the flame of it,
If Beauty sing like a birds' choir,
  They shall be deafened by our wit.

For this our bitter privilege—
  Lo! we have paid in tears and loss,
Who do in Beauty's wars engage,
  Singing, and bound upon a cross.

THE BLACKBIRD OF DERRYCAIRN

AUSTIN CLARKE

Stop, stop and listen for the bough top
Is whistling and the sun is brighter
Than God's own shadow in the cup now!

Forget the hour-bell. Mournful matins
Will sound as well, Patric, at nightfall.

Faintly through mist of broken water
Fionn heard my melody in Norway.
He found the forest track, he brought back
This beak to gild the branch and tell, there,
Why men must welcome in the daylight.

He loved the breeze that warns the black grouse,
The shouts of gillies in the morning
When packs are counted and the swans cloud
Loch Erne, but more than all those voices,
My throat rejoicing from the hawthorn.

In little cells behind a cashel,
Patric, no handbell gives a glad sound.
But knowledge is found among the branches.
Listen! The song that shakes my feathers
Will thong the leather of your satchels.

Stop, stop and listen for the bough top
Is whistling . . .

LENTEN LILY

HAMISH MACLAREN

When March winds waken
  All the hollow land,
And the piper has taken
  His new reed in his hand,

To flute at sunrise
  And at evening, till
Stars one by one rise
  And shine over the hill:

And earth's are the bluebell
  And the primrose pale—
Then at some new bell
  That is heard in the gale,

One voice will answer,
  But one will be mute:
And only one dancer
  Will dance to Pan's flute.

Sweet, sweet by the river
  Where that sorrow was,
In spring forever
  All out of green grass,

So tall, and so chilly,
  With dews by night shed,
The Lenten lily
  Will lift her lovely head:

As one who was dearest
  And died long ago,
And still is fairest
  Of all flowers that blow.

THE GUITAR

From the Spanish of

F. GARCIA LORCA

Translated by

ROY CAMPBELL

The lament begins
Of the guitar.
The wine-cups of daybreak
Are splintered afar.
The lament begins
Of the guitar.
It's useless, impossible,
To get it to stop.
It weeps monotonously
As the rainshowers drop,
As the wind weeps
On the snowpeak's top.
It is quite impossible
To make it stop.

It weeps for things
Far out of sight.
Hot southern sand, which yearns
For camellias white.
It weeps, the targetless dart,
The eve without morrow,
And the first bird on the bough
To perish of sorrow.
Oh, the guitar! the Heart
That bleeds in the shades
Terribly wounded
By its own five blades.

MONOLOGUER ON THE ARTS

FRANK O'CONNOR

"The man is finished," the Poet said;
"A fellow that writes for his daily bread
Is nothing but a whore;
He's sold to the racketeers," says he;
"And must write to order, not like me,
For three thousand a year or more."

"Three thousand a year or more—
Begod, but it might be four!
Terrible money!" the Poet sighed.
"Think of the drinks it would provide!
Fur coats and taxis galore."

"But Lust!" the Poet said with a groan.
"To write about things that never was known
Among decent girls for pay!
Terrible lies!" the Poet roared,
"That my conscience would never let me record—
Not for ten pounds a day."

"But still—ten pounds a day!
Begod, isn't it terrible pay?
Judas got only thirty bob
For a purely temporary job—
A foolish fellow, I'd say."

"But no," said the Poet, "I can't be bought,
I'm a man of independent thought
With a highly orthodox streak;
I always come out on the side of the Church,
But I'd never leave it in the lurch
For seventy pounds a week."

"But—seventy pounds a week!
Just to keep your tongue in your cheek.
When all I can get for religious rhymes
Is a guinea or two at Christmas times—
Begod, but I wish I was weak!"

SPRING BULBS

STANLEY SNAITH

The soil pours huskily in
Over the dibble's blade,
Light and loose of grain
As crumbs of old bread.

Wetting my hoe in dew
I shook over the crust
For a sunny wind betimes
To bring it to dust.

Here are my cold farthings
That bumped in a dark drawer:
I am setting riches down
In a richer sepulchre.

I send them forth in the night
On germy campaigning—up
By towers of sap to the air,
Down by a filmy rope;

Then turn to a different sowing,
With no cosmic intent,
To drive yet another shaft
Into the firmament.

IN SUCH A TIME

PHŒBE HESKETH

When the swallow's eggs are warm,
And the larch has slipped her snow,
When bees are met to swarm,
And grass has strength to grow.
When the year is keyed in deeper green,
The first high fever done,
In such a time we shall be seen
Beneath an older sun.

But the wind rebuffs the tree,
And frost reviles the flower,
And all we sowed we reap
This stern redemptive hour.
A sheath of steel protects the heart,
For flesh, like swords, must sleep.
Though we are captives, walled apart,
Love slumbers in the keep.

SONNET POLITICAL
(Of France)

NANCY CUNARD

Maybe they yet will get their furrow straight,
Maybe some fact unborn will point the road,
Maybe the ox will amble half awake
Another decade with the same bad load,
And grass proceed unhindered on war's grave,
The eye age in its tear indefinitely,
Justice *not* come—why not—so much's a lie
That is not rock; all's one, to spend or save;
We have known both—and shall. All's one remove
From what is finite. Bombs and rhetorics,
The interlock of allies, politics
In lieu of daily bread—all known. They prove
Nothing as does one patriot's death, one man:*
In this I see a land that says: I AM.

**Gabriel Péri, shot by the Germans and Vichy, in 1941.*

THE FIRST COMMUNION

From the French of

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

Translated by

NORMAN CAMERON

Stupid, these village churches, where a rabble
Of brats that smear the pillars with their grime
Hear, thickly braying out the sacred babble,
A black grotesque whose boots ferment with slime.
But through the greenery the sunbeams dabble
The odd-shaped panes with colours of old time.

The stone smells always of its mother earth:
You'll see whole piles of them, these earthy flints,
Throughout the plain, which quakes in act of birth—
Wheat interspersed with footpaths' ochre tints,
With purple sloes in thickets parched with drouth,
Dark mulberries and rose-trees' fleeting glints.

Each hundred years they give the barns a clean
With curdled milk and lye; and if some quaint
Religious goings-on are sometimes seen
Around Our Lady or the straw-stuffed Saint,
The flies come, redolent of farm and inn,
To gorge the wax upon the sunlit paint.

Children belong to house and home, with single
Care for the round of good, besotting toil.
They go home heedless how their foreheads tingle
Where the priest set his fingers to assoil.
The priest is paid a house and shady dingle
To leave these heads out in the sun to broil.

The first black coat, a day of special food;
Beneath "Napoleon" or "The Drum" a gay
Engraving where Christ's relatives protrude
Their tongues, it seems, in amorous interplay.
(When schooldays come, the setting will include
Two maps.) That's all that's left of the Great Day.

The girls are good churchgoers; they like to hear
Themselves described as "wenches" by the boys
Who after service hang around and leer;
While those lads who are destined for the joys
Of garrison life sprawl at the inn and sneer
At local squires, or bawl some frightful noise.

II

The priest has seen among the catechists
Assembled from the suburbs or rich quarters
This little unknown girl, lost in sad mists.
(The parents are a kindly couple—porters.)
"Singling her out among His Catechists,
God will rain on this head his holy-waters."

III

The eve of the Great Day, the child falls ill.
Ah, keener than the church's threnody,
The shudder comes—the bed has a warm thrill—
A superhuman shudder: "I shall die."

Then, like a love-theft from her stupid sisters,
Crouching with hands on heart, she reckons o'er
The Angels, Christ, his Virgin band that glisters . . .
Thus calmly she absorbs her conqueror.

Adonai! The Latin endings flood
Like green-silk skies upon the crimson Brow.
Stained with the heavenly breasts' unsullied blood,
Over the suns descend great cloths like snow.

Upon thy cool Forgiveness now she bites,
For her virginities told and untold;
But more than water-flowers or sweet delights
Thy pardons, Queen of Zion, are icy-cold!

IV

Soon Mary's just the virgin of the book—
They come to grief at times, the mystic cravings.
The images acquire a sickly look,
Smothered in tedium and cheap engravings.

Vaguely indecent curiosities
Afflict the chaste, blue vision with distress,
Caught fingering the heavenly draperies
Wherein Lord Jesus veils his nakedness.

She wishes, though, she wishes, soul in torment—
Moans stifled in her pillow—to prolong
The glory of that last, ecstatic moment,
And slavers . . . In the yard the shadows throng.

The child gives in. She stirs, arches her side,
Draws back the blue bed-curtain, in desire
To let the chamber's coolness gently ride
Over her belly and her chest afire . . .

V

When she awoke—midnight—the pane was white,
The moonlit curtains hung in a blue doze.
A vision came of Sunday's clear delight.
She had dreamed red—now she'd a bleeding nose.

Then, feeling full of weakness and quite chaste,
To share her love with God she yearned for night
Wherein the heart, exalted and abased,
Guesses how Heaven's mild eye beholds its plight.

For night, the hushed Maid-Mother, bathing all
Young ardours in grey impassivity;
For the strong night, where bleeding hearts let fall,
Unwitnessed, their unspoken mutiny.

Playing the victim and the little spouse,
Down through the yard her star beholds her wend,
Where, like a white ghost, hangs a drying blouse
And the black spectres of the roofs ascend.

VI

She spent her holy night in a latrine.
White air poured in upon her candle-flame,
Whilst, straying from a neighbour's yard, a vine,
Black and dark purple, played some crazy game.

The street-lamp made a heart of vivid light,
The low sky tinged the panes with crimson gold;
The pavement reeked of lye, oppressed all night
By murky walls in a black slumber's hold.

VII

Who shall recount these languours, these unclean
Pities, or what she'll learn of hate—ah, shame,
Religious knaves who make the world obscene!—
When leprosy devours this gentle frame?

VIII

When—all her madness tight within her breast—
Through her sad bliss she'll see the Lover dream
Of millions of white Maries he has blest,
And, in that aftermath of love, she'll scream:

"Knowest thou, then, that I have made thee die?
I took thy mouth, thy heart, all that thou hast;
And I am sick. Ah, would that I might lie
Among the dead, upon their Stygian coast!

"I was quite young, and Christ has fouled my breath.
He crammed me with disgusts up to the throat.
My fleecy hair thou didst with kisses wreathe,
And I allowed it . . . Ah, you well may gloat,

"Men! knowing not that the most loving one
Is, in her conscience ridden with mean fears,
The most unhappy and the most undone,
That all our urges unto you are snares!

Truly my First Communion is long fled.
Thy kisses, what they were I never wist.
My heart, my flesh with which thy flesh was wed
Teem with the putrid kiss of Jesus Christ!"

IX

And then the soul rotten and desolate
Shall feel the gushing of thy maledictions.

It has lain down on thy inviolate Hate,
Escaping, unto death, from just afflictions:

Christ, timeless thief of strength, God who hast vowed,
These twenty centuries, to thy pale bane—
Nailed to the ground, in shame and anguish bowed
Or supplicant—the heads of Women born to pain.

ON SAYING GOOD-NIGHT

ALAN ROOK

I have been near to-day
to that hard centre of all blessedness
which is the you I love. So let me say
my own magnificat and may
this gentle night shield you and press

on those twin stars your eyes her net
of dreams and quietness
and let
the whole world reflected be
in cloud and hill and stone eternally
all things in all
and all our actions shine with praise
for
the greatest of all mysteries
lies between you and me.

No one is perfect, no not one.
It takes a perfect two to make a whole.
Each bears a blemish, each at one remove
is distant from perfection.
My blemish was to be too much alone:
I had no focus for the things I love.

But when I see your grey eyes light to mine
and watch the gracious movement of your head
I know each tree
each cloud and stone and clover
reflected are in us who are all these
æon and cateract and pyramid
and more
light where darkness was before
parting and goal
each to the other.

REGENTS PARK (IV)

CHARLES MADGE

And there are gods, erections locally
Hallowed, street fountains, tablets, notices,
A white electric horse, a hanging key,
A commons of faded words and witnesses.

Above the traffic, on the walls, along
The railings, in the fume of travelling smoke,
Till the rain rubs them out or reads them wrong.
This phantom from their number we evoke:

"Lamp-post in lilac, iron centurion,
No longer the sweet gas whispers in your veins.
Lamp-lighters, father and son, have come and gone.
. . . No jet in your lantern without panes.

Invested yet by virtue of the years
And all the mortal faces passing lit,
A trophy of your time, with antique tears."
See, smuts corroded, dogs defiled it,

But the old frame is girded with the young
Leaves, between the terrace and the street,
And streaked with rapid sparrow's tiny dung.
In acid humus dig his iron feet.

Already the ruined foundries lie in peace,
Leaving their gaunt industrial progeny,
Like statuary of deserted Greece,
To make a dustman's archæology.

THE BRIDAL NIGHTMARE

GEORGE BARKER

By what I walk the curse of my lifted eye
  Peoples with memory
Clasping and kissing as bright snakes in shadows
  Hiss the wicked story

And the apple is touched and resounds like a gong
  In the heart of the misery
So that no flesh can smother and no mother hide
  The groan of the inconsolatory
Babe, thorn and pride of the abandoned bride.

I have died by the curse of the uplifted
  Heart, where an ego cried out,
Out! I have walked beside the self bereft
  And I was left alone
Cuddling the cold stone of the green-eyed ego:
  Still you and lamb go by
  Cold in the curse of my eye
Or come to the butchering gun of my hand
  Where I lift the poleaxe of abandoned
Love over ewe and lamb, love over ewe and lamb.
  Till the crime gibbers in the womb
And, swaddled in time, steps down the red-boned thigh
  Into a worse world. The rockabye
Cradle tocks like a clock in my breast
  And the judgments build up in the west
Where love, like a sun, labouring without rest,
  Dies night by night. Bright shawl
Of morning cover the bones of all love
  By whose lost heart I fall
And over the salt sea of my dereliction cast
  Darkness at last.

NOW IS THE FALL

CLIFFORD DYMENT

Now is the fall, but not death olive
Green and tawny lifts its hand to trick
The sun away from where we raise our eyes
Sick and hopeful after a violent summer.
Fall is not death, for nature is not mortal;
Nature is dead, the posting leaves proclaim,
Long live nature's the coiled buds' counter cry—
And so the year turns on, commending death
Walking in green in the flower and the forest.

O let us also find in death
Our mystery and our life!

Man has not learned, man has not lived,
And man is dying, in his death
Godlike as lightning and more ruinous.
God dishonoured, the altars deserted,
The evening mist on flower and forest,
O where shall he go until the third day
But into the night that comes
Surely as night to all that live
Proudly in life and do not die.

O let us early find in death
Our mystery and our life:
And let us say
Fall is not death, O man immortal.

WORDS FOR MUSIC

PATRIC DICKINSON

To be young.
To be alive like brand-new poems
The old try to translate
Into their outworn tongue.
O living fountain of rhythms
We dance to our own time only!
No truths of the past and over
Can inoculate us: we must suffer in full
Our own deceivers and lovers:
All must be lived again.
Like a blown-egg history lies
Impotent in cotton wool
Its trial and error explained
By the old.
But we from immaculate shells will break
And sing for ourselves for a little while
The unending human song
To the world unwinding:
To be young, to be old,
To be young.

TO A GREEN LIZARD
CALLED RAMORINO*

KENNETH HOPKINS

How many seasons since the leaning sun
Across those patterned scales let fall his ray
As on the burning brick, unmoving, unwinking, lay
The lizard Ramorino, lazily alive!

Landor a hundred years since saw him run
Along the lichened wall and disappear
With sudden twist and swift precipitate dive
Into some cranny secret and secure.

None may know Ramorino any more
Though but a moment since he seemed just here
With darting tongue and apprehensive eye
Upon this same sun-hot and mottled wall
Watching the sun bend through the slanting sky.

Whatever is lovely, even the green lizard, all
Bright things, seen or unseen, somewhere, these—
Colour and grace and movement—have their surcease.

A PRAYER TO VENUS TO BLESS A MATCH

G. S. FRASER

Venus, deity unfurled
  hot and shining as the sun,
throughout the dark and whirling world
  destroying and preserving one,

fingers by our arid shore
  cruel and pressing like the sea,
when the world's walls crack and roar
  jagged, riving deity,

I have known your rigour, and
  known your bounty in my turn:
goddess terrible and bland
  for whom all our altars burn,

**The title is borrowed from W. S. Landor—K.H.*

grant these two, since he is brave,
  grant, since she is kind and fair,
grant the vigilant night they crave
  with no footsteps on the stair.

Grant the warm, encircling gloom
  where his single taper glows.
Hush the whisper of the doom
  and the decent curtains close

round the bare and proper scene
  (strong river pulsing to calm sea)
of the rites these lovers mean
  to proffer to your deity.

This from you we supplicate!
  Grant, since she is fair and kind,
since he is brave! O irrigate
  with either body either mind.

TO MALLARMÉ

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

Master, I envy your boredom's vast canopy,
the noble resonant walls of your empty song;
most delicate breeze of despair that sighed in the long
and luminous meadows of ocean and sky!

But they've buried boredom, books, the nostalgic horn.
O hear the steel heart, the piston's murderous beat,
at night the doped somnambulance of rhythmic feet;
O see the streets are deserts and the tongue is torn.

Would you build sonnets of glass while the towers fall,
still chant and whisper, vaguely, translucently,
as the lustre is shattered and the floor-boards quake?

Primeval terror like a beast would rend the thrall,
a howling wind, a more authentic agony
sweep through your languid sails, and the sea-breeze break.

RICHARD ALDINGTON, HAPPY PAGAN

The Complete Poems of Richard Aldington. (Alan Wingate 16s.).

REVIEWED BY

ROY CAMPBELL

That a similar state prevails in the arts to-day to that which prevails in the overstaffed bureaucracies is proved by the vast preponderance in bulk of an irrelevant and parasitical literature of theory, explanation, and criticism which entirely overshadows and dwarfs the creative work around which it was originally written. In various branches of the Civil Service, employment has to be artificially faked for a huge mass of pen-pushers who are entirely superfluous to the original function of the department which employs them. This spurious secondary employment, because it nourishes a vast majority of pen-happy clerks becomes the main activity of the department: and the necessary purpose for which the department was originally founded becomes a subsidiary sideline existing only by permission and under the authority of the superfluous majority. A new language of officialese has to be invented (comparable to the meaningless technical jargon of contemporary criticism) to give the illusion of reality and necessity to this world of fake-employment which nourishes them. In literature the poet (that is the minority-man who is still performing the function of literature) depends for his contemporary fame and perhaps his livelihood, largely on whether his work can be used to illustrate the pet theories of the uncreative majority of politico-critical pedants who really for the time being call the tune. As Richard Aldington points out in his brief and masterly introduction to his collected poems, commentators on verse are more interested in discussing what they call "tendencies" than on studying the work of the poet. One crossword-conscious pedant has the effrontery to tell us that he likes his poetry "difficult," as "something to be wrestled with", and for every clear-headed poet, like Aldington, there are at least three hundred of crossword-conscious professors demanding, like this one does, to be *puzzled* by poetry which is more difficult to read than to write; poetry in which they can joyfully hunt the thimble of meaning through haystacks of self-bamboozlement; poetry which is vague and formless but offers (like Leonardo's mildewed wall) a million suggestions of half-meanings and glimmerings of sense. Whenever the reader, the listener, or the spectator wants, as in this case, to join in the show and "be clever too" he crashes a great donkey's hoof through the whole function of art and reduces it to collective barbarism and imbecility. Aldington does not

cater for this collective craving. There is not enough hesitancy or obscurity in Aldington's work to nourish a single one of these parasitic interpreters, or employ even a part-time hack-translator of verse into literary officialese, the function of the modern critic. He is his own commentator; his verse, even though concerned with great profundities of thought and feeling, is always explicit and clear. It is for his earlier rôle as a daring innovator that he has received more recognition than for his subsequent achievement as a poet, which entirely eclipses his earlier, better-known, anthologised work. It is only on reading this magnificent collection of work written during the last thirty-five years, that one realises how shamefully one of the best of living poets has been neglected: and also that in Aldington's case (as in the rare cases of Hardy and Lawrence) a first-rate novelist has been equalled if not excelled by his own achievement as a poet.

In his introduction he tells us that, in his experience, poetry was not the result of selfconscious effort but seemed to occur quite spontaneously and mysteriously. "That is the moment of poetic ecstasy," he tells us, "which almost invariably occurs in a mood of what Wordsworth called 'wise passivity'—all the rest is hard work." At a very early age Aldington was already endowed with such lapidary skill as a chiseller of poetical medallions, that he was able to discard the traditional aids to poetic form from the outset. By dint of sheer "hard work" that skill has become a second nature: so that under the stress of passions which tend to make most other poets long-winded by discursive love, anger, or hate it enables him to find the fullest expression in the fewest possible words. Brevity, with him, is not only the soul of wit, but of passion. Though he has written long poems of perfect construction, like *The Dream in the Luxembourg, A Fool in the Forest* and *The Crystal World*, they are formed, liked crystals, of smaller crystals, each of which is a separate whole, brief and crisp as an epigram.

Aldington was one of the first English poets of this century to discard the conventions of rhyme and metre, which were unnecessary to him. The vast majority of English poets have since discarded these conventions for looser and freer forms which are easier to write, but which often prove that the discarded conventions were of as great a necessity to them as a bellyband to a fat man. Aldington discarded them for a stricter and more difficult form which can hardly be called free verse because of the masterful control which regulates and balances every detail with the minutest precision: and which enables him to perpetuate moments of illumination in forms as hard and clear as gems, which, nevertheless, retain the warmth, fragrance, and freshness of the first impulse to write. If we compare his verse with much other rhymeless and metreless verse, we begin to see what rhyme and metre were originally intended for. The rhymes were intended as hurdles, ditches, and hedges, to tire out long-

winded poets so that they would soon lose their breath and shut up. The metre was apparently intended to serve to the average poets' thoughts as a corral serves to a herd of jungle-happy nanny-goats to keep them from rambling, and straying, and getting lost. Together rhyme and metre acted as a sort of corset to Muses who suffered from Elephantiasis of the Soul (as they usually do when they have little to say).

Though Aldington was one of the few who originated the whole movement of what we call modern verse: he took no part in any of the commercially collectivised "*movements*" or "*tendencies*" during the nomadic interwar period when almost every article was headed "towards a new synthesis" "towards" a new this, "towards" a new that, and "towards" a new the other; every review and every magazine, with the same stale and mouldy monotony that christens Tea-shops "olde," was christened New:- "*New* Roads," "*New* Trails," "*New* Tracks," "*New* By-passes," "*New* Highways," "*New* Byways," etc., until this Ye Olde Newnesse became a pain in the neck: and one yearned for some review to be called "old" by way of novelty. A *New* newness was needed. There is no doubt it was intended, by the number of different sorts of roads that were mentioned as "New," to suggest some kind of vast unrest, a nomadic or migratory "movement." But there wasn't the slightest "movement" "*towards*" anything: the illusion of "movement" or "tendency" was kept up by violently marking time in perfect goose-step. Step was changed simultaneously in perfect time—always toeing the line of financial expedience. Nothing else could explain the sudden simultaneous conversion (as soon as it was expedient) of peace-time belligerents into war-time cushion-bashers: and of fire-eating bolsheviks into mealy-mouthed apostles of a theosophoid and buddhistified travesty of anglicanism which bears about as much relation to Christianity as the Boy-scout Movement does to the Regular Army. How all these neck-spraining volte-faces can happen so suddenly and simultaneously without causing a single broken neck or even a loss of balance anywhere, is quite easily explained by the fact that by sheer hard practice double-facedness has become as much a second nature to this "*school*" of poets who ruled the roost for twenty years, as skill became to Aldington through hard work. And it was a "*school*" in more senses than one:—

"O Sunrise, bare-kneed captain of my first school," ! ! !

lisped one of these grizzled and superannuated Billy Bunters who was acclaimed for this or similar flights, by that indefatigably oily trickler of unction, Mr. Cyril Conolly, as the "Mont Blanc" of Contemporary English Poetry, towering over the heads of his contemporaries. If we look up any of the poetry periodicals of that epoch we will find (as in a copy of "*New* Verse" which I have here before me) that the poets of that time who were most in the limelight were preoccupied almost entirely with what was either politically or morally *unreal* i.e.,

Utopias or Vices: and they had developed a critical jargon to deal with these subjects which is comparable to the abracadabra of superfluous government pen-pushers in dealing with the printed forms whose only purpose is to give them employment. Aldington had no contribution to make to this false paradise. In a fake-world where Mont Billy Bunter represented the "ceiling" as it were, and soared in snow-clad majesty over the rest of the surroundings, there was no room for anything like Aldington's verse. He did not mix business with inspiration: he did not do anything that got one into the limelight of the book trade: he never banqueted for "democracy" in the rearguard in Spain: nor preached a bogus egalitarianism in which its own most fervent poetical exponents believed less than anyone else, and of which they only practised the very opposite; he had in fact behaved at one time like a *black-leg* and *practised* a sort of human equality (instead of merely preaching it) by serving his country in the ranks, sharing their lot with his fellow men, and skulking away there in the trenches—when he should have been boldly holding the fort with his eating-irons as a chairborne parasite-trooper in the Knife-and-Fork Brigade, like the Billy Bunter set up did in this last war. It is no wonder that he was ignored: but a wonder he was not boycotted for the straightforwardness and honesty of his work, since he has many a laugh at the literary claptrap of an age which for sheer Alexandrian pedantry and false pretence has no equal in our past literature. He could not interest anybody in a *tendency* "towards" anything for he had long ago found his way to where he *is;* and (thank God!) he is not likely to try to develop a "*tendency*" in order to attract the unburied corpses of an abortive generation such as ours has done its best to become. They say no man can fully savour and enjoy living until he has thoroughly experienced love as a lover, poverty as a poor man, and war as a soldier. That is to say the more one has enjoyed, experienced, and suffered the more zest it arouses. I should add religion to the other three volcanic fountains of power and joy, and put it first: but I notice that Aldington seems to have the same feeling about religion and religious people—as I have about pagans and free-thinkers, namely, that they are a puritanical crowd of kill-joys, teetotallers, cowards, dyspeptics, eunuchs, communists, suicides, vegetarians, pessimists or hypochondriacs; and for every unhappy Christian writer he could show me I could give him half a dozen cases of delayed birthcontrol, delayed demise, or, to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous (hold your noses, boys!)—delayed burial like the unutterable panegyrist of Mont Bunter! However that may be, it is a delightful experience, which makes me revise some of my views, to meet in Aldington the one example I know of a happy pagan writer who enjoys life although (no, rather *because*) he has seen and felt a rougher side to it than our modern moaners as one can see from his war poetry: who wears his

vast erudition and scholarship lightly and gracefully, without pedantry; whose mature experience is not sour or vinegary but has the tartness of the real ripe apple of knowledge from the garden of Eden. He has written some of the finest love poetry of our time. He has none of the collective disillusionment which for so many years sold both itself and the public so successfully. One reads him not only for the poetry but for the companionship and comradeship of the man whom we feel to be so brave, sincere, generous, and full of charm. Robert Frost is the only other poet who gives me the feeling that I know him personally, as Aldington does; though I've never met either of them. His poetry has been obscured for us by the fake-screen of "movements" and "tendencies" for the last generation. But now it has come to us all together, and for good!

> And if one day is trampled underfoot
> Or another forced awry or another stunted,
> Still there are days and days and golden days
> Like aconite-stars under the grey heaven of olives.

POETRY IN AUSTRALASIA

I. THE ROOTS

PHILIP LINDSAY

That there should be a shrine to Adam Lindsay Gordon in Westminster Abbey is more appropriate than all the statues raised to his memory in Australian cities, Gordon not being an Australian. A Scottish exile, he expressed practically nothing of the spirit of the country that became to him a jail he could only escape by blowing out his brains. Nevertheless, he cannot be dismissed, as he did help to inspire later and better poets with the galloping rhythms of balladry he had plundered from Sir Walter Scott. But it might well be argued that the ballad would have risen in Australia if Gordon had never been sent there, for it is the natural voice of youth, loved not only by young people but young nations, whether sung in England to the Nut Brown Maid or by Gordon shouting in Australia that he would live the same life over if he had to live again.

Gordon was not needed to spur Australia into song; the voice of the ballad-maker would yet have been heard had he never sailed from Britain. The young land, land of the bushman, that lover of horses, had to sing to the hoof-beats of rhyme. To-day we are liable to despise this form because it has become too often the townsman's selfconscious effort to appear simple-hearted, yet that it can be used powerfully by mature minds I hope to show later in these essays. Here it must be

mentioned because it was the first individual voice of the nation, the defiance of the child snapping the mental umbilical cord that held it to the homelands.

While the ballad-maker swung muscularly into song, some delicate souls were attempting to write like Englishmen in an alien land; and, as they deserved, they mostly failed lamentably. But from almost the earliest times the true Australian had been trying to assert his love of country; and when Charles Wentworth came second to Praed for the Prize Poem for the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge University in 1823, he managed, even through the stilted style of the period, to express his mood of exile:—

> And shall I now, by Cam's old classic stream
> Forbear to sing, and thou proposed the theme?
> Thy native bard, though on a foreign strand,
> Shall I be mute and see a stranger's hand
> Attune the lyre? . . .

The thought might be Australian, but it was clamped in the dreary conventional couplets to which the genius of Pope had been debased and jailed, while it might have been written by a Cockney who had sailed no further than Tilbury; and it was not until many years later that the Australian began to think inside his own environment. Kendall attempted to do so occasionally, but others such as Victor Daley were mainly content to echo England palely with roses and watered wine.

Of these early un-Australian Australians it is not necessary to speak further, nor do I intend to write a history of my country's poetry, lacking the time, the space and the ability for such a task. In this first essay I wish only to dig a little at the roots; and strong amongst those roots, deep in rifts of gold, lies the ballad.

Its greatness flowered with Henry Lawson and A. B. "Banjo" Paterson whose *Waltzing Matilda* has become Australia's unofficial national anthem. To decide between these two men's work would be futile; both spoke so clearly for their country that already has their work become a heritage repeated even by the most illiterate, by men not knowing from whom they quote, as the Bible and Shakespeare have given phrases to the language when the sources are often forgotten. Lawson and Paterson made Australia articulate, they became the voice of millions, and that is an achievement great beyond the comprehension of minor poets who shrug from them as mere sing-songsters using occasional false rhymes. But they will be remembered long after the poetasters pattering obscurely to delight a clique, and that assuredly is proof of genius. Not purely because he was a mighty poet and profound thinker does Shakespeare stand above all, but because he spoke for mankind, while most of his contemporaries have been forgotten, except

by scholars, because they lacked this common touch. That is a point too often ignored by commentators in their coldly intellectual towers railing at the neglect of some excellent poet who once spoke for a few. Such poets' works are, of course, valuable, particularly to other poets; but when it is good, the people's poetry rings to eternity. And in that world, Chaucer and Shakespeare link hands with Lawson and Paterson.

The poetry of both these men is well known in England, and there is no need to quote their work, but a few lines from Paterson will show what I mean by the importance of people's poetry which can, or should, stir all hearts and excite behind all brows, high or low:—

Then the last jump rose before us, and they faced it game as ever—
We were both at spur and whipcord, fetching blood at every bound—
And above the people's cheering and the cries of "Ace" and "Quiver"
I could hear the trainer shouting, "One more run for Snowy River."
Then we struck the jump together and came smashing to the ground.

Lives there a man who has so far outdied his youth that he does not tremble to that music, taken haphazardly from the volume of Paterson's nearest to my hand?

While the ballad was sung perfectly, others were exploring poetry, most of them dully, if pertinaciously, while now and then one spoke with the authentic voice; but it is only comparatively recently, first with Hugh McCrae, then with Kenneth Slessor, Robert D. FitzGerald and Douglas Stewart, that the Australian poet reached maturity's assurance.

But before these men arrived, while they were striving for perfection, others were singing, some splendidly; and no student of Australian poetry can ignore the work of the late C. J. Brennan, a scholar whose scholarship at times pressed heavily on his work; yet he had fire when he broke the bonds of too-cautious prosody and could speak with passion:—

The banners of the king unfold
to tend me on my evening way,
my trumpet floods the air with gold;
my pride uplifts the vanquished day.

The riches of my heart are bled
to feed the passion of the west:
the limpid springs of life are shed
and Beauty bares her secret breast.

while here indeed are mighty lines:—

and darkling on my darkling hill
heard through the beach's sullen boom
heroic note of living will
rung trumpet-clear against the fight;

so stood and heard, and rais'd my eyes
erect, that they might drink of space,
and took the night upon my face.

Victim of Mrs. Grundy—or rather, of the wowser, to use a vital Australianism—Brennan died in poverty. A man whose largesse in conversation might be compared to Dr. Johnson's without Johnson's cant, who carried lightly in his mind rich cargoes of profundity and merriment, he defied the wowsers by drinking openly in a wine-bar with a lady not his wife almost directly opposite the gates of Sydney University where he lectured. Friends implored him to forgo this gesture, but with a poet's superb contempt for life's littleness and its Lilliputian yet killing bonds to bind a Gulliver, he defied authority and was dismissed by it to the devil of poverty; indeed the last occasion on which I saw this great man and poet was when he begged a pair of boots in a pub near Woolloomooloo, and with his courtly gestures he gave the impression, and a just one, that he was bestowing a precious boon on the embarrassed provider of boots.

Lawson, too, came under the envious hatred of little minds determined to cage an eagle. Prohibition orders were sworn against him that he might not be served in any pub, with the result that his outraged admirers carried so many bottles to their persecuted comrade that the wowsers, aghast to see such jolly brotherhood, were forced to lift the ban lest he perish of d.t. Worshipped though he was, few would give him money on the extraordinary excuse that he might spend it on drink, and one Sydney bookseller is alleged to have paid him a weekly sum to keep out of his shop lest with a dignified hiccup he blow away the lies puffed about him. Yet when this great man died, the little folk who had flinched before his breath, skulking behind lace-curtains when the gaunt noble figure passed with its soldierly bearing, crawled out to give him the most pompous funeral ever seen in New South Wales, and they put his old pen under a glass case in the Mitchell Library now that it could no longer write to denounce them.

Such are—or at least, were—the rewards of genius in Australia. Had Lawson been paid as he deserved for his work, would his need for escape through liquor have been so urgent? not that I would insult his memory by taking from it a single pint, but then the necessary debauch would have been gay instead of miserable and therefore he might have written great works, no man being able to produce his best under the continual lash of poverty, earning only sufficient to get drunk again to forget a country which, while bowing at his name, condemned him to sobriety in an effort to imprison his soul in dullness.

There were other poets during this period, many of whom to our good fortune are still with us. E. J. Rupert Atkinson wrote not only gay rousing

lyrics but constructed subtle psychological plays in a land without a theatre; Dorothea Mackellar wrote with charm and often gentle humour; Bernard O'Dowd with a heavy pen plodded at a monotonous monotone occasionally lit with beauty; Winifred Shaw wrote a handful of lyrics as vivid and enchanting as any to be found in any anthology; William Baylebridge at times unearthed a jewel under the heavy weight of lumbering lines; and using the name of Furnley Maurice, Frank Wilmot, keeping to his declaration of faith that "If everyday life and language have no place in poetry, then poetry has no right to exist," gave us such clear-cut scenes as this:—

> I've heard the waggon wheels grinding by ruts and stumps,
> Scouring the black night for a possible camp;
> I've watched the breeching flop on the horses' rumps
> In the green light of a wavering bottle-lamp.
>
> And I have come at last on a sweet home and a bed
> And woke to see through the broken blind a munching cow at the bail,
> To hear, while the magpies yodelled in the slow dawn's searching spread,
> The sharp spurt of the milk into the pail.

and this noisy, living picture of a Melbourne street-scene:—

> Gobbling turkeys and ducks in crates,
> Pups in baskets and trays of eggs . . .
> Rabbits skinned in a pink nude row,
> Little brown kidneys out on show.
> "Cheap to-day, lady, cheap to-day."
> Slimy fish slide off the tray,
> Women pondering with a sigh—
> "Spend or perish, buy or die!"
> Packed with babies and Brussels sprouts
> It's a rickety pram for a woman to shove—

Then there was—and I should write "is," thanks be to poetry's god or devil—Hugh McKay, a lean laughing cavalier, scornful, as well he might be, of the world that would give him comfort in a newspaper office while ready to let him starve as a poet. He relaxed—or rather, sprang to life—with witches and wizards in verse when he could shut away the office; and what we have lost by his long silences we know by the sadly little he has given us. Only one of his poems, alas, have I by me here in England, and although not his best, the opening verses are characteristic enough to bear quotation:—

Bereft of sleep,
I steal, by paths of night that bring no ease,
Across the forest-deep
And hear the undying trees
Chanting, in mockery, of forgetfulness
Forbidden one who loves a witch, who sees
The black world of her brain swing in her skull
Like a dark spider in a web of dreams, to snare
His lost soul, wandering there.

I drew her home beside the forest-fall
In the dark heart of cedar-boughs to dwell,
Beat down with force of arm each witching-thrall,
Stared down with mocking gaze each wizard-spell,
Till with soft kisses and with sweet regret
Of warm arm twining, she caressed me there,
The witch I trapped in a green-sea net
With silver bees in her hair.

Now that I look back over the years, many are the poets that come to mind, an army gayer and larger than I had realised, too many to be mentioned here save in insultingly brief lines. Leon Gellert, for example, whose *Songs of a Campaign* can stand without fear beside Siegfried Sassoon's war poetry; and we who love the ballad should not forget the larrikin lilt of C. J. Dennis's *Sentimental Bloke;* but there are others, many others, who should be mentioned, apart from those, like Anna Wickham and W. J. Turner, who wrote in England. Particularly must Shaw Neilson be allowed to speak. A labourer who had something of W. H. Davies' vision, a noble simplicity of the heart with a child's delight and wonder at beauty :—

The young girl stood beside me, I
Saw not what her young eyes could see:
—A light, she said, not of the sky
Lives somewhere in the Orange Tree . . .

—Listen! the young girl said. There calls
No voice, no music beats on me;
But it is almost sound: it falls
This evening on the Orange Tree.

But of Neilson I always love, even if it is not near his best, this puzzled picture of policemen at play:—

Hard men they were; they had been hated sore
For thirteen moons, and now one day did take;
Softening to smiles they now did think no more
Of the dull sinners who came out to break
Laws that the sternest statesmen strive to make.
Let every law, they said, dry up, decay!
All this was on a hard men's holiday.

That solemn mood, however, is not typical of Neilson, nor did he usually stumble over his "dids" so painfully, and before we part from him, we might quote four lines to show that even here, into his delicate vision, the rub-a-dub of the ballad could break:—

Your face is like the music that bids us all be young,
And the sharpness of the gooseberry is tasted on your tongue.
Oh, some do love the dream-ladies that urge them to the blue:
The angels are too high—I love a low love like you.

To open this series on Australian poets I have made I fear too rapid a survey to do justice to the material, but space is small, and these minor poets are many; and the word "minor" refers not to quality but to the small output. In a land unprepared for poetry, they sang against silence, only now and then sending a verse to the *Sydney Bulletin* or some lesser paper; and any anthologist with patience would find in the files of that excellent weekly a collection, I am certain, of fine work by forgotten men and women.

Intellectually one may despise success, yet all of us need at least a little praise for our hearts' comfort; even the greatest must slacken and despair before continual indifference. Yet slowly in Australia was true poetry born, fierce with the murderous sunlight, sombre with the depths of pale greenery in the bush, merry with the ballad ringing to hoofbeats, and defiant, sardonic, laughing with the spirit of those adventurers who had fled comfort and security to build another Britain oversea; but it was not until the coming of Kenneth Slessor, Robert D. FitzGerald and Douglas Stewart that one might safely say that poetic consciousness in Australia had reached maturity.

With Slessor, the first of these three in time, that consciousness was revealed by one who had the intellectual ability, the technique, with passion to stand as the first genuinely great Australian poet to whom the debt is now being repaid by younger men and women with the coin of song; but that debt is not even yet fully realised as it will be in future when scholars prepare their studies of an age of lyricism that can be compared only to seventeenth century England when, it seems on looking back, every man was a poet, a soldier or a philosopher—and sometimes all three—while the world fell in chaos about him.

GAWSWORTH COLLECTED, VOLUME ONE

The Collected Poems of John Gawsworth. (Sidgwick & Jackson, 10s. 6d.)

REVIEWED BY
T. W. RAMSEY

It is a long while since I reviewed a book for *The Poetry Review*, but I thought that perhaps in this case I might be permitted to break the habit of silence. A book by the Editor of the Review should be one of especial interest to us; and it has been my lot in years past to make a few comments on this writer's work, as back numbers of the Review can testify. So there is at least the possibility of tracing some sort of logical development over years.

The first thing to note is that John Gawsworth's book *Collected Poems*, a handsome production with frontispiece, does in fact belie its title, and is obviously not a complete collection, but a fairly comprehensive recension of this poet's work 1929-1946. "Jealousy," for example, a poem in *The Mind of Man* collection does not appear; which is a disappointment, at any rate to this reviewer.

The poems that do appear are arranged chronologically and a straight reading through will therefore exhibit the development of this poetic talent; which in work as plainly sealed as this with a sharply cut personal stamp is also that of the poet.

This development plainly shows the impact of the war, and in general terms I would say exhibits a transition from fire to air. Fire and arrogance characterise the Gawsworth of the first half of the book: there is beauty in the first poem, *Turville Mill*, but still it is malediction that it creaks "against the eternal stars." Here in the words of his Juan, he "frets a fury" and "erupts a sonnet"; he burns to a white heat in poems like *Fodder* and *The Gadfly*, and then melts all to music in the beautiful two-beat sprung rhythm of *Inconstancy*, so effortless, so signed with the exact moment, so inevitable. Here the softer and more meditative pieces have fire under them—witness the much and deservedly anthologized *Roman Headstone;* and a little poem not so well-known perhaps, but a favourite of mine, *Winter Pain* from *Poems*, 1938. Short enough to be quotable, this:—

O bright was Winter on the branch
One morning early,
When holly tried its blood to stanch
With spiked leaf pearly!
I saw its little berry-wounds:
I saw them clearly—
And sudden knew Life's soldier rounds
Come cruel, yearly.

There is a deceptive simplicity in this, which is by no means artless; it will never épater la bourgeoisie—and let us be thankful for that. But in the deft placing of its sounds, in the crystalline rigidity of its imagery it can still furnish a useful object lesson to some of the more strident voices of the moment.

New World, the last poem in *The Mind of Man* selection is significant. "All now is spent, collapsed upon the sand" it begins, and the last verse is:

> "All is well spent, small matter after all
> In world's relations with the moon and sun
> The fact of Man's betrayal of himself,
> The fact that After-time has now begun".

Significant because it is in the following group, *Marlow Hill,* that the change of element noted above first begins to be clearly manifest. The fire does not burn so fiercely and there is — as perhaps one would expect in the middle war years—rather more preoccupation with death, decay and dissolution.

> "The crackle of falling leaves,
> The start in the hedge"

we begin, and note that

> "Autumn death is sharp,
> Military, cold."

We inspect the torpedo bomb, buried in Buckinghamshire soil.

> "What strange conglomeration's here—
> War's brutal-hurtling broken spear,
> Till late the very shaft of fear,
> And all the lazy litter of a farm's loose hemisphere!"

There were many strange conglomerations in those years; and poets were not exempt. This is a heavier and deadlier air, and the poet's arrogance, though still unsubdued, is not so notable. But how that last line expands!

I said from fire to air. Air means intellect and I think it would be true to say that, though Gawsworth is not an intellectual poet in the narrow sense of the word, there is in his second period more intellectual as there is less emotional force. To some extent this lessens its value, as profundity is not as yet a general characteristic of his work. But profundity is as rare as the creative intelligence of which it is, I suppose, a natural manifestation. A poem like *Permanence,* if it achieves nothing new, does at least throw a fresh light on the old and tried. And it is good to be told more than once that

> "No heart insensible to clay
> Creates for public good."

The heart insensible to clay is too much with us in these days.

In these later poems the notes of bitterness and disillusionment are increasingly prominent. The mirror here is perhaps less that of the poet than of the times, which consciously or unconsciously, if he is alive, the poet must reflect. From this same pressure derives the bias to self-analysis, so characteristic of Gawsworth's poetry.

There is a specially lovely oasis or island of beauty in the later work, *Six Poems* from *Phases of the Moon, a tragedy of Cleopatra.* Too long for all but a portion:—

> Eyes that spoke of fierce soul, quick heart,
> Veiled eyes that brooded upon night,
> Cleopatra had; and no man's art
> May re-illume their sight.
>
> Her slow speech chimed like bells at dusk
> Heard faintly on the gentling Nile.
> Slurred syllables, like vaporous musk
> Larding her voice, recalled an aisle
>
> Of Alexandria's gardens: these
> Bewitched and moulded man's weak clay.
> In softness, scents and subtleties
> The might of all her beauty lay . . .

But this portion exhibits perfectly the fundamental properties of Gawsworth's work as a unity. The extreme sensitivity, the quickness of apprehension, the effortless arising of imagery, the economy of words, and above all the natural ear for cadence in verse and the right blending of syllable length and force of stress—the latter by nature more than art, I think—all are shown in these lines, equally with one of the poet's particular foibles—the deliberate introduction of words which come in like strangers, dressed unsuitably for the occasion.

It is not for me to prophesy in which direction this poet will go. I have a feeling that he has exhausted his present vein and must prospect new country. If he brings to this new field his present gifts and a riper experience we shall I believe have from him a second *Collected Poems*, nothing inferior to the present in music and sensuous charm, but even more significant in its bearing on human thought and purpose.

SITWELLS—AND SOME OTHERS

Selected Poems by Sacheverell Sitwell. (Duckworth 8s. 6d.); *Direction Seven—a Celebration for Edith Sitwell.* (New Directions I, $50.); *Commemorations by John Pudney.* (The Bodley Head, 3s. 6d.); *No Rebel Word by John Hewitt.* (Frederick Muller Ltd. 7s 6d.); *Gates of Beauty and Death by C. Busby Smith.* (The Fortune Press, 6s.)

Reviewed by
P. D. CUMMINS

A recent review of the new edition of *The Letters of John Keats* contained the statement that it was impossible to imagine the poet with toothache. In other words, Keats is damned as a Romantic because his work fails signally to suggest his own vulnerability, as a human being, to prosaic ills. Assuming it to be true that the value of a creative artist's work depends upon his ability to strike the common chord, what is the significance of such a poet as Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell whose *Selected Poems* have just been published by Duckworth?

Here we have a talent which certainly cannot be measured by the convenient yardstick of the down-to-earth school. To those who have deliberately looked their last on all things lovely, who, indeed, regard beauty with a morbid distaste, an almost superstitious dread, it will have little to say. Sacheverell Sitwell's fastidiousness, meticulous craftmanship, and subtle and intricate variations are not calculated to impress a world that eagerly capitulates to shock-tactics, babbling, as it does so, of existentialism. Moreover, he is a difficult poet: that is to say, the pure classicism of his work forbids any direct appeal to the emotions. The reader must familiarise himself with these poems before he discovers that within the heart of the diamond which is Mr. Sitwell's crystallisation of past, present and future, there is a white fire. In this light, the apparent complexities resolve themselves into that simplicity which only those who possess true integrity can attain, and which is, perhaps, most marked in the Greek approach to art. One of the loveliest examples of this evocative music of antiquity is "Derbyshire Bluebells", for which I have only sufficient space to quote one verse. Describing a wood as "one blue flame of love", Mr. Sitwell continues:

> "There is no space for foot to tread
> Unless you bruise the flower head,
> No corner where you cannot hear
> The dove's long croon, the thrush sing near,
> Like bells out of the trees' tall spires
> These songs above the bluebell fires."

Here is sheer, sensuous beauty, and in what Sir Osbert in the preface to his brother's book describes as a "dingy, screwpenny age of pinched and withered talents", it has not received its due meed of appreciation. Let it be placed to the credit of this same niggardly age, then, that it has at least fully appreciated the genius of Edith Sitwell.

Certainly no living poet, T. S. Eliot and Walter de la Mare excepted, has received such a wealth of tributes, of which *Direction Seven,* edited by José Garcia Villa, is amongst the most discerning. This number of *Direction, A Celebration for Edith Sitwell on the occasion of her visit to the United States,* is devoted to essays and critical analyses of her work by such distinguished writers, to name but a few, as Professor Bowra, Charles Morgan, Stephen Spender and Arthur Waley. It also contains *Gold Coast Customs* and eight of her most important poems—poems which largely explain why even this unhappy generation has not withheld from Edith Sitwell its whole-hearted admiration. We see how the astounding *Gold Coast Customs* brought to an end the first phase of her work in whose almost dangerously brittle brilliance time had no meaning; we see how, on the contrary, in all her later poems, time has taken on a terrible significance, has, indeed, become synonymous with suffering, strengthening, deepening and ennobling the creative output of her maturity. No more deeply moving poem has resulted from the war years than "Lullaby", whose desolation is the measure of the world's loss:

"Heed my ragged lullaby,
Fear not living, fear not chance,
All is equal—blindness, sight,
There is no depth, there is no height:
Do, do".

It is a cry of despair, yes—but as Professor Bowra says, it is also a challenge "to circumstances so malign that she cannot see an end to them, and yet she refuses to admit that they defeat her." This rare quality of spiritual courage which transforms anguish into a crown has won for Edith Sitwell the unique position she occupies to-day in the literature that will last. *Direction Seven* will be, as it deserves to be, widely read, since it not only honours her, but sheds new light on her approach to life and her symbolism. Every contributor has something particular to say, with the exception of—to me, at least—the late Gertrude Stein:

"In a minute when they sit when they sit around her.
Mixed it with two who. One two two one two two.
Mixed it with two who.
Weeks and weeks able and weeks.

Unlike the weeks, I am just not able.

In passing directly from, say, a vast canvas by El Greco to a miniature by Cosway, it is necessary to keep one's sense of values intact and to remember that both painters, widely separated as they are, have made

their own particular contribution to art. For Cosway read John Pudney, whose first post-war collection, *Commemorations*, contains 28 new poems. Because I like and admire Mr. Pudney's work so much, I must say at once that I do not feel this new book is amongst his happiest. Many of the poems in it are of a more ambitious nature and do not fit into the framework which is peculiarly his own. Cosway, no doubt, painted full-scale pictures, but it is for his miniatures that he is memorable; so it is with John Pudney, whose great merit is the unpretentiousness, the lack of artifice which enables him to infuse his lyrics with a natural sentiment that never lapses into sentimentality. I can think of no other present-day poet who can convey with such directness the simple emotions which are an integral part of our lives—it was, for instance, precisely his poem, "Johnny-Head-in-Air", which made *The Way to the Stars* so unforgettable a film—and now, more than ever, in a chaotic world, there is need for a writer who can give us the assurance that there is still something fundamentally decent and honest in human beings, that love and compassion still exist. For this reason, I regret the note of disillusion and defeat which Mr. Pudney sounds in *Commemorations;* I do not want to find him, as he says in one of these poems, "faith all spent"; I prefer to seek him when he is moved by constructive anger and pity. Even though this is not his best book, it does contain one perfect example of his art in "Displaced", whose three short verses sum up the whole tragedy of the living-dead:

> "They came to the silent places
> Where frontiers divided race from race.
> As the pursuing silence reached each head,
> Dead whispered to dead.
>
> So ended each journey's span,
> Each recognizing neither ghost nor man.
> None from the dead or living came and none
> Claimed anyone".

When desolation such as this is part of the accepted order, it is small wonder that a nature poet of the quality of John Hewitt should be a *rara avis*. Mr. Hewitt is already well-known in Ireland, and his book: *No Rebel Word* will appeal to those in this country who are sick of the waste-land and the kind of verse which Geoffrey Taylor aptly describes in his preface as "the product of the zeitgeist". Like all nature poets, John Hewitt has his vices as well as his virtues; he can lapse into such prosiness as:

> " 'He lost his left arm working on a farm,
> Last year in England when the binder caught it,
> And nearly pulled his bloody shoulder out.
> He always was a bugger for machines ... '
> And then as if an afterthought, he added:
> 'And so he can't go back like the rest of them.' "

This is the worst Wordsworth, but then he can be as good as Wordsworth and John Clare at their best, as in his two perfect "Sonnets in October". Here is the sextet of the second:

"For in October born, my veins have kept,
whatever men with lens and blade deny
about the implications of the blood,
a sober joy that, squirrel-curled, has slept
till wakened by the flame in leaf and wood
for all the coloured summers crowding by".

Last on the list is a young poet of twenty-four, C. Busby Smith, who has not yet learnt to be sufficiently selective, sufficiently self-critical. *Gates of Beauty and Death* suffers from the inclusion of too many poems that are unworthy of his very obvious talent, of such astonishingly mature work as "Interior of the Cave" (spoilt only by the phrase "angel moon"), "The Heart Protected" and "The Hand Withheld." It is because I recognise his great potentialities that I hope Mr. Busby Smith will not fall into the fatal error of rushing everything that he writes into print.

MYSTICISM AND REASON

Arthurian Torso: by Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis (Oxford, 12s. 6d.).
Pillars to Remembrance: by John Redwood Anderson (Oxford, 10s. 6d.).
Travelling Home: by Frances Cornford. Illustrated by Christopher Cornford (Cresset Press, 8s. 6d.).
A Masque of Reason: by Robert Frost (Jonathan Cape, 7s. 6d.).
Intimation: by H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford, 6s.).
Sonnets on the Fens: by Constance Breed (The Fortune Press, 5s.).
Songs of Sherwood: a Book of Verse and Prose by Fred Kitchen, Illustrated by Kenneth Beauchamp, (Dent, 10s. 6d.).

Reviewed by
WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

When writers of the quality of the late Charles Williams and Mr. C. S. Lewis come together within the pages of one book the certainty of scholarship, spiritual dialectics and distinguished style may be presumed in advance. The author of *The Screwtape Letters* has a countless following, but Williams' work, both in poetry and prose, had no wide appeal in his lifetime although it won the commendation of discerning critics. All that work was shot through and through with Christian fervour. He was a poet of conformity, moving among doctrines and mysteries with the ease of intellectual familiarity which never declined from an attitude of profound humility. His range of knowledge and his literary vocabulary were immense, and his handling of both prose and verse was superbly confident.

Like G. K. Chesterton, whose outlook he so often shared, Charles Williams was early drawn to the Arthurian Legend and fascinated by its central symbol, the Holy Grail. In this field he laboured and explored for many years, the poetic result being the poem in thirty-two lyrical pieces published in *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, and the prose result the posthumous fragment in the present book which Williams had named *The Figure of Arthur*. This fragment, and Mr. Lewis's loving commentary upon Williams' poem, make the "torso" of the title.

It is clear that Williams had planned a great and comprehensive work which would have ranked high in Arthurian literature, but we have to be content with a fragment 85 pages long—a fragment, however, which is certain to endure. "There is no question here," says Mr. Lewis, "of a modern artist approaching the old material as a quarry from which he can chip what he pleases, responsible only to his own modern art . . . . Nominally he is writing criticism or literary history, but in reality creation is going on." And that is finely said. We have all tasted our Malory and have jaunted with literary guides through the Mabinogion, through Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace and Layamon and de Borron and Chrétien de Troyes; but Williams employs his scholarship to the end of re-creating the history and the legend in a final acceptable form. He *could* see the wood for the trees, and the wood was Broceliande and the figure most clearly discernible was Arthur.

What concerns us here more than the mystical appurtenances of the legend is Mr. Lewis's section of 110 pages in which he provides a detailed interpretation and criticism of his friend's poem. It is of a kind that must send many readers to the poem, but they must be prepared for difficulty both of matter and manner. Williams revelled in shadowy backgrounds and the profundities of mysticism, and in verse technique he was a restless experimentalist. Mr. Lewis comments wisely: "the greatest danger of extinction which threatens this poem will come from its obscurity. And that danger will probably increase with time: not because the poem will become harder—it may, for a very considerable time, become easier—but because the extreme indulgence towards obscurity which characterizes the taste of modern readers is not very likely to last." That may well be the case, but if Mr. Lewis expresses these doubts he expresses also a solid conviction of praise for the beauty and splendour of much of the poet's thought and statement, for his "strength of incantation" and for the opaque, enamel-like quality of many of his lines and phrases. Take these three quotations as witness. First, of a soul enslaved by resentment and lust:

> I sat and scratched.
> Smoke in a greasy thickness rolled round the cave,
> from flames of fierce fancy, flesh-fire-coloured.

Then, the vivid painting of a scene:

> he saw
> through the unshuttered openings of stairs and rooms
> the red flares of processional torches and candles
> winding to the king's bed,

And finally, note again the powerful use of sprung rhythm:

> Her hand discharged catastrophe. I was thrown
> before it. I saw the source of all stone.

Certainly no other unpopular poet of our period has been delivered to the judgment of time with so splendid a recommendation as that given of Charles Williams by his friend.

A poet whose mind is somewhat akin to Charles Williams' is Mr. John Redwood Anderson. The work of both men derives from and is influenced by the sense and conviction of the spiritual nature of man. Williams shows man in relation to God: Anderson poses man, more daringly, in relation to the Absolute. Each employs myth to a degree quite unusual in modern poetry; and each has the power to project the flying moment on the moving scroll of the Past. But there the resemblances end. Both are lords of language, but whereas Williams will at times strain brevity to the point of impairing syntax, Anderson occasionally lets his verbal accomplishment carry him beyond the statement's necessity. But I do not cavil at that; it is an olympian fault, at one with his generous attitude to those twin contradictions, the burden of life and the enjoyment of living. His *Pillars to Remembrance* are many, and from the legend and the shadowy myth he turns to the pulsing life of the present:

> Son of this latter day,
> I look back as I may
> on the fading red and gold
> of the tapestried days of old . . . .

and:

> For I am filled, as is a cup with wine,
> with the first lusts of Nature. I press close
> to the rank body of Life; and touch, with gross
> inquisitive hands and lips grown sore
> with sensual kisses, the divine
> rude Flesh of the world.

In Charles Williams' poems, and in others of our time, the reader often comes across what Mr. C. S. Lewis calls the "unshared background"—the poet's private thoughts or reading or experience—but there are not many unshared backgrounds in Mr. Anderson's poetry; it is rich with communications, even when it strives most earnestly towards the Incommunicable.

Mr. Anderson is of course in part a Georgian, and here is another poet from that despised "age", Mrs. Frances Cornford, who has attained,

with Mr. de la Mare and Mr. Blunden, the enviable distinction of being generally admired. She has what I may call a remorselessly gentle eye for a picture or a mood: remorseless, that is, in its unflinching integrity of vision, and gentle, oh so gentle, in the way it then looks at you and seems to say, "Did you see that too?" One such occasion of exercise for Mrs. Cornford's eye is made memorable in "Behind the Greek Restaurant":

> The Cypriot woman, as she closed her dress,
> Smiled at the baby on her broad-lapped knee,
> Beautiful in a calm voluptuousness
> Like a slow sea.

Mrs. Cornford knows what Wordsworth and Robert Burns knew, the wonder of the commonplace; and she knows, too, that honest scansion and simple rhyme still serve excellently to sing thoughts into the listening heart. In this little book the reader meets Mrs. Cornford, the Cambridge scene, her house and family, and indeed anything that crops up and gets itself noticed—but chiefly he meets Mrs. Cornford's eye.

The publishers of Mr. Robert Frost's new book of forty poems and two Masques are right in describing him as "America's greatest living poet": he holds the title by virtue of consistently fine performance and by seniority—and yet perhaps there is no younger wise mind in American literature to-day. Mr. Frost is young in the audacity of his thought, in his wit and in the ease of his colloquialisms. His maturity is shown in his intellectual grasp, which achieves profundity without obscurity. The arguments of the two Masques, *A Masque of Reason* and *A Masque of Mercy* cannot be stated in a brief notice; but what they seem to be (in the one) is that:—

> There's no connection man can reason out
> Between his just deserts and what he gets.

and (in the other) that:—

> We have to stay afraid deep in our souls.
> Our sacrifice, the best we have to offer,
> And not our worst nor second best, our best,
> Our very best. . . .
>
> Courage is what it takes and takes the more of
> Because the deeper fear is so eternal. . . .
> . . . Nothing can make injustice just but mercy.

In these dialogues—between Job, his Wife and God; and between four allegorical moderns—there is not a loose word, all are compact and essential to the poet's plan. If you have ever seen a Dorset mason building a dry wall you will have seen how Robert Frost works, lovingly, patiently

layering his quietly selected words in well-balanced lines. I am less certain about the lyric poems and versified comments in the book; they give the reader admission to the poet's mind when, as it were, he is off duty from his high concerns, taking time to stand and stare—as Mr. Andrew Young or Mrs. Cornford would—and registering a landscape or a mood:—

> Once down on my knees to growing plants
> I prodded the earth with a lazy tool
> In time with a medley of sotto chants;
> But becoming aware of some boys from school
> Who had stopped outside the fence to spy,
> I stopped my song and almost heart,
> For any eye is an evil eye
> That looks in on to a mood apart.

Another quiet voice in the turmoil of the modern world is heard in Mr. H. A. Margoliouth's *Intimation,* a little book which has a devotional and almost private atmosphere. I don't remember ever hearing Night and Day dealt with in terms of a cricket match, but that is what Mr. Margoliouth very charmingly does in "The Score". Yet lightness is rare with him, his predominant note is heard in "The Leaf":—

> I am alive, a soul immortal, now,
> And God and I are one as leaf and tree:
> What though I waver on the windy bough?
> Yet the great trunk with sap sustaineth me.

Nature takes a full measure of Mrs. Constance Breed's devotion in *Sonnets on the Fens*, Nature and the sonnet form itself. She interprets the East Anglian landscape in poems which have the cumulative effect of an exhibition of water-colours from a pleasantly accomplished hand. Her instinct is for the framed phrase:—

> Nature herself is frozen as a scene
> Painted on canvas. . . .

Where she fails is not in her seeing eye—that is alert enough—but in her tendency to use old well-worn statements, such as "as old as Time," "the evening hush", "tender green", "patient toil" and similar easy effects.

With Mr. Fred Kitchen there is no overt claim to write poetry, but he contrives rattling good country verse and, if we are content to forget our elementary economics and our experience of farmers' lads, we shall be satisfied with this. His prose is first-class, too, full of fresh observation and information. Combined, they make another excellent country book.

AMERICAN DIRECTIONS

The Works of M. P. Shiel by A. Reynolds Morse (Los Angeles: Fantasy Publishing Co. $6. London: E. J. Carnell, 17 Burwash Road, S.E.18. 32s. 6d.).

In the American Grain by William Carlos Williams (New Directions $1.50)

New Directions 10, edited by James Laughlin (New Directions $4.50).

The Blue Stairway by Joseph Joel Keith (American Weave Press $2).

Reviewed by
RANDALL SWINGLER

Many members will recall M. P. Shiel at his reading of his own *Poems* in Russell Square in January, 1937. He was seventy-one at that time, and I have heard that this was his penultimate appearance in London before his death in Sussex two years ago.

This flamboyant Irish genius, whose fancy seemed to be debauched upon science and sociology so that he wrote like a Galway peasant narrating one of the scientific romances of H. G. Wells, is here subjected to that meticulous record of detection which has become characteristic of the American literary faculties. Mr. Reynolds Morse interprets the word "Works" in its widest sense, and includes with bibliographical details, some glimpses of Shiel's life, actual and fanciful, and the documents relating to the Kingdom of Redonda, of which Shiel was crowned first monarch by the Bishop of Antigua, and to whose throne has succeeded on his death, "our most noble and puissant . . . John Gawsworth, Prince of Our Blood." The tracing of all Shiel's voluminous work is no easy task, for he used a number of pseudonyms, and was sometimes vague in the recollection of his own productions; but Mr. Morse has been painstaking and indefatigable in recording much of this utterly unusual personality which might have been lost to memory.

New Directions, in republishing at this time the American poet Dr. Carlos Williams' *In The American Grain,* have produced a most timely *rappel à l'ordre* for his countrymen. This is altogether a very remarkable book, the work of a poet, and historian of rare and austere sincerity. Dr. Williams' writing is impelled by an irresistible urgency, as his razor-sharp phrases whittle down to the essence of the American tradition. One is perpetually reminded while reading, of D. H. Lawrence (and in particular, of course, of his brilliant *Studies in Classical American Literature*),

but of a Lawrence with a steadier, more rational, gaze and a more concise but no less urgent style. Lawrence's *Studies* were first published in 1924, and Dr. Williams' book in 1925, so it seems likely that a direct influence is there. The essay on Poe, in which he reverses triumphantly the commonly held view of Poe as a European intellectual marooned in barbarous America, is perhaps the high point of the theme and method of the book. In proving that Poe was in fact the first truly indigenous American writer, Dr. Williams provides a much-needed reminder of what really makes a native, a *local*, literature—"the flower of a locality and so the *full* expression of a democracy." He dashes aside with a superb impatience, the irrelevant: he carves down to the quick of history. At a time when American intellectuals were rifling the cultural riches of Europe for import into their own country, he cries: "he wants to have the feet of his understanding on the ground, his ground, *the* ground, the only ground that he knows, that which *is* under his feet. . . . The predominant picture of America is a land æsthetically satisfied by temporary fillgaps."

New Directions 10 gives the impression that the same intellectual trek to Europe has started again in America. The Editor in his preface admits that "American literary culture is in its wide extension, debased to-day", and he does not indicate that there is much to be learned from Europe except "patience . . . Translating the good European books for publication here is important; it injects some new life into our creative blood stream." There seems to be little recollection here of Dr. Carlos Williams' injunction to *sink*, to descend into the historic roots of America. American writers allow themselves to be too easily repelled by "the visual and aural vulgarities of the U.S.A." And here we have the skimmed surface of cultivated holiday reading in Europe. Only the sections of French and Italian poetry really show any sign of "New Directions"; most of the American verse seems to exhibit the terrible effect of W. H. Auden's influence imported into the U.S.A. Without the driving force of Auden's own moral fervour, his trick of making poetry out of a magpie accretion of stolen treasures and old lumber becomes merely flat and figureless. Two British poets represented here both exhibit too the relaxing influence of this facile Audenesque discursiveness. If in this volume there is nevertheless variety, and "divergent trends", there is also a pervading sense of suspended vitality, of hounds casting around for a scent, rather than any voice in full and certain cry.

Mr. Joseph Joel Keith attempts no new direction at all in his *The Blue Stairway*; but his handful of homely little poems, with a faint wood-smoke tang of Robert Frost, are probably nearer to the nineteenth-century American tradition than anything in the preceding volume.

SHORTER REVIEWS

On Seeming to Presume. Lawrence Durrell (Faber and Faber, 8s. 6d.).

Every critic has a personal choice among the poets he reads, as distinct from his professional choice.

I make this clear because I am reviewing Lawrence Durrell as an admirer and it is a disappointment to record that the poems in "On Seeming to Presume" are not as good as those in "A Private Country" and "Cities, Plains and People." The old magic (I once described Lawrence Durrell in *The Poetry Review* as "a clever magician") just is not there or else time seems to have dulled it. There are no lively, vivacious poems like "Alexandria," no robust poems like "Mythology," no shrewdly critical poems like "Byron," no rollicking poems like "A Ballad of the Good Lord Nelson," and no lyrical poems of the quality of "Nemea" or "Water Music."

All that remains to Durrell's admirers are that typical cleverness which does not always come off,

> "Instead of this or that fictitious woman
> Marry a cloud and carve it in a likeness",

Durrell at his shrewdly amusing in "Song for Zarathustra," "The Critics," and "The Daily Mirror," and glimpses still of the author's verbal magic as in this description of green coconuts:—

> "Broken, you think, from some great tree of breasts,
> Or the green skulls of savages trepanned."

In other words the technique is there; it is the inspiration that has inexplicably failed us.

I have a feeling that Durrell may have become tired. He refers in "Politics" to the three common desires:—

> "Of hunger, smiling, and of being loved"

and there is an uneasy suspicion between the lines that this is all that now matters . . . Elsewhere, in "Phileremo" he says:—

> "Reflected there
> In a cistern I heard you thinking: Europe
> Also, the whole of our egopetal culture
> Is done for and must vanish soon."

"On Seeming to Presume" is not a bad book; judged by ordinary standards it is certainly among the best Poetry of 1948. But it marks quite definitely a falling off ... It now seems clear that Durrell will have to find further inspiration outside Greece and Grecian themes, find some country of the mind or of the flesh where the dancers are no longer painted on ageless memorials, but are alive in all their grotesque attitudes and follies. He has been too long away on islands.

JOHN WALLER

A Crown for Cain by Emanuel Litvinoff. (Falcon Press, 7s. 6d.)
Poems on Several Occasions by Kenneth Hopkins. (The Grasshopper Press, 2s.)
Orisons, Picaresque and Metaphysical by Iain Fletcher. (Editions Poetry, London, 7s. 6d.)

In the longest poem in Mr. Litvinoff's book of poems he describes his central figure in these words:—

> "Yet something was set between his heart and mind
> intangible as division of a kingdom,
> strange as a barrier between two brothers,
> for with the sprouting of his ruddy beard
> he gathered virgins for his scented couch
> yet found nor joy, nor comfort of the lonely spirit."

Reading through these poems one has the impression that Mr. Litvinoff has had a pretty bad time of it and we are heartily sorry for him. It seems that he himself "has found nor joy, nor comfort of the lonely spirit," for his work is full of unsatisfied desires, of ill-digested Freudian imagery and other bad influences. Mr. Litvinoff perhaps *has* a "ravenous thirst for life" and perhaps that *is* a fortunate inheritance, but what he evidently has not is a poetic talent. To quote him yet again it may be a case of "Too much but too small experience." Even if that something "set between his heart and mind" were levered out by some Harley Street psycho-analyst I doubt that there would be any more poetry, which is a pity because Mr. Litvinoff is evidently determined to write poetry and has made serious attempts at reacting coherently to the world about him.

Unlike Mr. Litvinoff, Mr. Kenneth Hopkins has no pretensions. His poems are not modernistic or filled with startling imagery. He is not technically brilliant to be sure, but he is a sincere artist and gives us evidence of a genuine poetic personality and a sympathetic sense of humour. *Poems on Several Occasions* are poems for everyman, including Mr. Litvinoff.

Having once got over the shock of, if not become reconciled to the title of Mr. Fletcher's book, the reader should need little time to realise that this poet has a strong sense of the traditional in form and technique yet is every inch a "modern poet". There is that unmistakable personal movement in almost all his work which distinguishes the true poet, and if some parts are less distinguished than others, it is quite possible to say that here is sincere experience objectified.

There are love poems, metaphysical poems in various styles, literary reminiscences of Peter Abelard and François Villon (especially the charming "Ballade de Vraiment Bête" with its delicious refrain:

Plant a quiet mistress all of stone,
She's better than a shrew in lace;

there are picaresque poems, poems about the war and the author's experiences in it, orisons and elegies for his friends, and all of these show the same devotion to the best traditions of English poetry. Indeed, elegant fluency is to be found in most of the seventy-odd pages of the book and it is this eloquence which is especially disarming. It tends to deflect the reader from the individual word, and it may be that this gift for rhythms and textures has diverted the poet's attentions likewise.

PETER RUSSELL.

Poems by David Wright (Editions Poetry London 5s.)
The Singing Blood: Poems by Geoffrey Wagner (The Decker Press, Illinois, $2.)
More Poems and Translations by Malcolm H. Tattersall. (The Author.)
A Horse with Wings by John Harrison. (The Fortune Press, 6s.)
The Listening Tree by Herbert Bluen. (The Fortune Press, 5s.)

Mr. David Wright runs the appalling risk of beginning the first poem in his book with one of Shakespeare's most masterly lines; but he is clever enough to get away with it, and his point is clear.

He has a voice, and a strong one. His cadences are always sure and pleasing, his adjectives precise and accurate, his individual images vivid and arresting, though sometimes so thick that they tend to obscure what he is trying to point with them, possessing perhaps too personal a significance to carry. Some natural symbols are too often used—the words "rain" and "spring," for instance, recur with almost comic regularity. But against this tendency towards the lyrical cliché, there are images as forceful as:—

"And you soldier
sentry with frozen rifle the false dawn,"

and as lovely in texture as:—

". . . The constellations wheel
westward; and westward the reluctant moon."

Mr. Geoffrey Wagner's is an impressively produced volume from America, with a blurb claiming that "There is deep feeling evident in these poems, as well as the taste and power to transmute this feeling into transmissible coin." Deep feeling there may be; but the coin can hardly be called "transmissible". Most of the images are of so private a nature and significance that they do not carry to the reader at all. Or else they evoke very different connotations in him from their printed intention—since he, too, has his own private symbolism, which is not of the same kind. Whether he calls himself one or not, Mr. Wagner is, in fact, a surrealist, and, like most surrealists, seems to ignore the simple

fact that unconscious cannot appeal to unconscious direct—one of them must go through the conscious junction and change lines. Indeed, the most striking thing about this book is not its "transmissibility" but its cramped incoherence.

The disciplined lucidity of Mr. Malcolm H. Tattersall's verse is commendable, though, inevitably perhaps in such a formal writer, he tends to use the stock phrases as well as the stock forms. Most of his poems are brief and epigrammatic. *Sneak Raider at Dusk* is typical:

Night sheds, unmoved, her disregarded boon
Upon this bastard renegade of Mars.
The very moth derides him, to the moon
Unknown, and unacknowledged by the stars.

There is about John Harrison's work in *A Horse With Wings* a vigour and a sort of diffident spontaneity which is very engaging—an apparent zest for life and a burning itch to write about it: to write about everything. It is perhaps this eagerness to leap outside the moment and set it down, while at the same time wanting to savour the moment itself to the full, which makes so direct a contact with the reader—almost as though an eager and very intelligent friend were to rush in, grab you by the arm, and rush you out again with him to share a new discovery. The thing discovered may be new only to the discoverer, but much of the freshness of first discovery is there, and the receptive reader is infected by it. Sometimes, inevitably, Mr. Harrison's eagerness runs away with him, and his daring rushes do not always come off.

But memory is cute
And can't be cheated,
Give us more than we want,
Gives us the past
All potted-meated.

True: but more comic than it perhaps meant to be.

In direct contrast with Mr. Harrison is Mr. Herbert Bluen. His is a quiet voice, speaking quietly of quiet things. He follows the traditional formulæ and uses, for the most part, the traditional vocabulary which, because it has been used so often before, has come to be known as "poetic," and therefore, to a great many people whose emotions usually over-ride their judgment, as the only usable vocabulary for anything that rhymes or scans.

The "prose-poems" included in Mr. Bluen's book are, to my mind, an unfortunate mistake. They are neither one thing nor the other, and are uncomfortably sentimental. But in the poems themselves there are many felicitous touches and lines of considerable beauty, such as:—

". . . stars, their anchored lights impart
To fields a quietude that lies like snow."

JAMES WALKER.

Act Five and Other Poems by Archibald MacLeish. (Random House, New York.)

It is sometime since we have had a book of poems from Mr. MacLeish He has been in the government service and the service of the United Nations, holding the posts, among them, of Librarian of the Library of Congress and Assistant Secretary of State. We read in the morning paper that Mr. MacLeish has been appointed for seven years to the Board of Trustees of the Sarah Lawrence College. From this book a striking tribute to the young dead soldiers arrests our attention:—

THE YOUNG DEAD SOLDIERS

For Lieutenant Richard Myers

The young dead soldiers do not speak.
Nevertheless, they are heard in the still houses; who has not heard them?
They have a silence that speaks for them at night and when the clock counts.
They say: We were young. We have died. Remember us.
They say: We have done what we could but until it is finished it is not done.
They say: We have given our lives but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave.
They say: Our deaths are not ours; they are yours; they will mean what you make them.
They say: Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say; it is you who must say this.
They say: We leave you our deaths. Give them their meaning.
We were young, they say. We have died. Remember us.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

THE NOVA SCOTIA CENTRE OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

During 1948, under the Honorary Presidentship of Sir Joseph Chisholm, nine regular meetings have been held and three Executive ones.

On Saturday, March 13th, the ninth birthday of the N.S. Centre of the Poetry Society was celebrated in the form of a dinner at the Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax. The birthday cake was not cut but sent intact to the Poetry Society, London, England.

The June meeting and the last one of the season was held at *Winwick*, Marlborough Woods, the home of Premier and Mrs. A. L. Macdonald.

All in all, it has been a happy, successful year, the happiness only shadowed by the passing of our beloved former President, Miss Norma Smith. Her graciousness and sterling qualities will long be remembered and the memory of the beauty and eloquence of her words remain a lasting inspiration.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

May I send you an adaptation from the nineteenth century French author, Alphonse de Lamartine?

What is poetry?

It is the incarnation of the intimacy of Man's heart and the divinity of his thought: it is the expression of Nature's magnificence and the mirror of melodic purity. It is simultaneously the emotional and the sensuous, the spiritual and the material. Prose addresses itself only to the mind, poetry speaks to the mind and the emotion at the same time: for this reason it is the most complete language, the language which is indeed food for every facet of Man's nature, ideas for the mind, emotion for the heart, images for the imagination and music for the ears. When this language is given its full and finest expression, its many voices crowd upon the heart and weave such enchantment that doubt is banished by inner conviction.

Man can neither produce nor receive an immeasurable volume of poetry at one time for, possessing him completely in soul and mind and exalting him through thought and sensation, it weighs him down with a sensuous weariness (as in the case with all pleasure so perfectly complete) and exhausts him, since it compels him to put forth all the spiritual and emotional power within him. Poetry is the mirror of all experience and all time: it is as simple and as gentle as the cradle: as full of story and legend as the nurse who weaves the spell of the past in a child's mind: as romantic and pastoral as youth and shepherd: as war-like and epic as the warrior and the conqueror: as mystic, lyrical, prophetic and sententious as the theocracies of Egypt and Judah: as serious and philosophical as the Greek and Roman civilisations: as turbulent and convulsive as revolutions and wars: new, old, sprightly, melancholic, uncertain, timid and audacious, this is poetry whose voice utters dim forebodings, fantastic dreams and firm hopes of the resurrection of humanity from the dust of chaos. Poetry is Man himself, his instincts: it is the inner echoing of human desires, thoughts and emotions: it is the expression of all that soars above the chaos of generations and lives to give them voice when they are forgotten.

I am, etc.,

R. D. Morrison.

Sir,

I have been a member of The Poetry Society for some years now and during that time I have searched in vain for humour in the verse to which you have given publicity and minor awards. Your selected blackbirds, thrushes, and nightingales have sung sweetly (and plaintively)

from your poetic woods for so long, one would assume the cuckoo to be either an outlawed or an extinct species.

It might reasonably be concluded from this that in your opinion while the sad is inherently poetical, the gay is not: that the sob is per se sanctified poetically, while the chuckle is immediately declassed. That conclusion would be, I hope, erroneous; but the strange exclusion of humour from your pages might foster the misconception.

This question of the importance which is attached to your official pronouncements and policy leads me to comment on the two poems which our President, Mr. T. W. Ramsey, selected as the prize-winners in the last Premium Competition but one (Volume xxxix, No. 5, December 1949–January, 1949). It is not for me to dispute his decision (nor, indeed, could I without having first seen the other poems), but you will not object, I am sure, to my pointing out that in "Spring Frost", verse 2, lines 3, 4, and 5, are unaccountably left in the present tense. Surely this is sheer ineptitude? The use, too, in the first verse of such a monstrosity as "Yesterweek" needs some explaining away. The last line of the poem Mr. Ramsey admits is weak—and it is not the only one.

In "Lied" the whole intention of the writer was ruined for me by the abuse of repetition—a powerful weapon used sparingly, but liable to give a precious and hence comic effect when persisted in, as much as in "Lied". I noted the repetition employed in the first verse and expected to find the same device later—but probably not before the end. When, therefore, I read in the second verse,

> "When only a child,
> Lone, lone
> In a vast desert
> Of asphalt and stone,
> I knew no horizons, far, far—
> Longing my sun, my moon and star"

I felt urged to say in line 4,

> "Of asphalt and stone, STONE!"

and in line 6,

> ". . . my moon and star, STAR!"

Verses 3, 4, and 5, alas, made the impulse quite irresistible, and reduced the whole poem, for me, to the level of Mlles. Stitch, Partridge and Strong. To say that to ridicule is easy is a truism of which writers of verse should be aware. It is to their credit that many of them are careful enough to minimise the risk.

In conclusion, may I say sincerely that no one would contest that you have always given valuable encouragement and help to members with poetic aspirations. It is with this in mind that I venture the opinion

that the position you hold in the world of poetry demands a certain standard of competence in the poems you publish. In the last Premium Competition, I accept Mr. Ramsey's judgment that "Lied" and "Spring Frost" were the best of the poems submitted; but did that bare fact entitle them to the conferred dignity of an award and publication?

I am, etc.,

R. P. BRETT.

Sir,

I cannot concur with Mr. Randall Swingler in welcoming the inclusion of "The Cap and Bells" in the new selection of Keat's poems, published by Peter Nevill. So far from Keats making "a hoist at Byron with his own petard" and the stanzas serving to rescue their author from a reputation for mawkishness, "The Cap and Bells" is a most embarrassing reminder that it was Keats who could call "Don Juan" nothing better than "Lord Byron's last flash poem"; and when one realises that he, who reverenced Spenser second only to Shakespeare, chose, of all metrical forms to try to be funny in, the Spenserian stanza itself (*i.e.*, not the 'ottava rima' which Byron's genius seized upon as the perfect medium), and—almost worse still—used for his heroine the Bertha of "The Eve of Saint Mark", then one must surely attribute the composition to that same pathological disequilibrium which elsewhere made Keats mawkish. It came, indeed, from the same source as all the hysterical clowning, as distinct from the controlled merrymaking, of so large a part of the letters, and cannot be classed among the light verse for which Keats always had some bent. It has its place in the full story of Keats the man, but is not fitted for any selection of his poetry, and Keats himself would, I am sure, have deplored its reprinting. It is never witty, never funny: it is a pathetic attempt by a tormented man (it was started towards the end of 1819) not to be his true poetic self, to be, in fact, Lucy Vaughan Lloyd.

Nor can I allow Mr. Swingler's dismissal of Byron as "only acting out on the world stage the part of the stock romantic novel hero", or as a "type-cast" personality, to go without protest. True, Byron, was the supreme individualisation of "Byronism" (though that is not as easily definable as Mr. Swingler seems to think), and one can call him "second-hand" if by it one means that in him was most clearly and fully represented all that "the 'new man' of the Napoleonic era" was and did; but my own reading of Byron's work and of many of the books about him has made me understand more and more vividly how unique he also was, how big, how complex, how, if you like, monstrous—how Shakespearian. And it is this realisation that makes me regret Mr. Fuller's presentation of him to innocent minds as only a satirist.

I am, etc.,

W. G. BEBBINGTON.

MR. RANDALL SWINGLER replies:—

Mr. Bebbington has, of course, as much right to his opinion as I to mine, but it remains a matter of opinion. That Keats had a poor opinion of Byron is well known:—

> Mock lyrists, large self worshippers,
> And careless hectorers in proud bad verse.

He also thought that Byron's emotions were "second-hand". "Byron's perverted education makes him assume to feel, and try to impart to others, those depraved sensations which the want of any education excites in many." I find no more embarrassment in being reminded of this than of the much more severe and prejudiced judgments on Byron of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt or Lamb. And when Keats started to write "The Cap and Bells", Byron had not yet begun to experiment with "ottava rima", so that the use of "the Spenserian stanza itself" was natural to one who was "having a go" at Byron—and, be it remembered, at himself.

"Pathological disequilibrium" is to me a long name for something from which all poets generally suffer, or profit; which in fact predisposes them to poetry rather than carpentry or doctoring. Was there ever a man who suffered from it in a greater degree than Byron? And the fact that Keats included himself, and his own literary idiosyncrasies, in his own humorous criticism is a symptom to me more of balance than of that morbid hysteria with which it has been so fashionable to plaster him. At any rate, "The Cap and Bells" must not, as I said, be over-rated, but I retain *my opinion* that for those who wish to understand Keats "in the round," as he was (and not as we might like to think him), it has its place in any representation of his work.

Finally, as a reviewer I must correct an injustice I appear to have done to Mr. Fuller, if I seemed to imply that his book was intended to present Byron to "innocent minds as only a satirist." Because an editor only sets out to present one outstanding fact of a character "big, complex, Shakespearian" in a pocket format for modern reading, I don't think it need be regretted. My own necessarily compressed remarks on Byron were only tentative suggestions towards explaining precisely that impression of "monstrosity" which Byron gave to his contemporaries as to Mr. Bebbington. I think myself that Byron did discover "Childe Harold" on his first visit to Europe, and that the creation increasingly through life got a hold on the creator. But this is a far too big a question to be discussed in a review or a letter, and I must be grateful to Mr. Bebbington for readjusting any one-sidedness which may have appeared from the compression inevitable in my review.

Incidentally, the Spenserian stanza seems to have been a very popular metrical form at that time for "trying to be funny in"; Hood, Hook, B.W. Proctor (Barry Cornwall) all used it at one time or another—but that is by the way!

THE PREMIUM AWARD

This is the first series of Premium entries I have been privileged to judge, and I have been impressed by the high standard attained by the majority of entries.

I have decided to share the award—£5 each—between Mr. H. V. S. Page for his *Eternal Mountain* and Miss L. Vaughan Thomas for her *Poem.*

I feel that *Eternal Mountain* might have been strengthened by rhyme endings. Its authentic music, however, has carried it through convincingly, and the impression it leaves as a whole is not far short of what the highly original subject promises.

A cat asleep in the sun has been the subject of many poems, but seldom has such an original note been sounded as that in Miss Vaughan Thomas's *Poem.* It is delightful all through and, in my opinion, only marred by the dangerous, and an always dangerous, repetition—in this case the unmelodious word "concentrate."

Of the "Highly Commended" poems, especially due mention are Miss Phillippa Christie's *The Assegai,* which unfortunately does not keep up the promise of its opening line, and Mr. L. P. Biggie's *The Girl at the Blue Boar,* an experiment in humanity and homely story-telling worthy of a more substantial theme.

THOMAS MOULT

HIGHLY COMMENDED

L. P. Biggie, London, S.W.1.
Phillippa Christie, Cambridge.
Elisabeth Cluer, Bideford.
Winifred Gérin, London, S.W.5.
Denis Griffiths, Bletchley.
Juanita Peirse, Chelsea.

COMMENDED

F. T. Barber, Birmingham.
John Blanford, Worthing.
Ruth Crary Clough, Illinois.
Patricia Coursey, Cheltenham.
Alan Dane, Dorking.
Anne Harris, Birmingham.
Michael Hay, Highgate.
Terence Heywood, Arundel.
Jean Kenward, Chorley Wood.
Margaret Martyn, Nottingham.
Cynthia Palmer, Huntington.
Celia Randall, Co. Down.
John Sibly, Stonehouse.
Malcolm H. Tattersall, Bexhill.

ETERNAL MOUNTAIN

These are the old ones, the parents;
For them the journey is ending;
They are so far ahead along the road
—The road narrows, grows steeper, is more strewn with boulders—
That we children can no longer hail them;
They do not hear our voices,
Though we see that they turn to seek our features

From out the concourse with which we travel;
Their calls are blown and tangled in the rising wind;
And now they bend forward to the misty summit ...

I cannot hurry after them, spurning the shingle with swift feet,
Sending my vigour with shouts ahead of my progress,
So that they hear, and stop, and smiling await me.

For me the road rises to sunlit uplands,
Offering here the resistance of wild bushes,
And here the delay of a craggy canyon,
And here the reward of green pasture.

Resting by the wayside I regard the valley.
The valley is filled with light.
Rising from the valley comes the music of children.
Down there are sweet meadows and wide, gentle rivers.

I remember my sojourn in pleasant places,
When there was unity among us, and no parting.

There was a hearth we had, a place for living,
That which we call home; it was our satisfaction.
It was my anchor, in my adventures,
I was comforted to recall it, and in the outcome to re-enter its doorway,
Giving greeting, and blessed by welcome.

I declare that life is movement;
It is not to be imprisoned:
The moments are an elusive current.
It is not to be resisted; the force compels us;
The road beckons.

When I left the hearth I reduced its warmth,
The flames flickered and the ash crumbled,
And the red heart of the coals darkened a little.

There is a death between us, young and old,
A barrier between our generations.
We cannot cleave to the flesh that gave us life,
Nor linger at the hearth of our nativity,
Lest the old take strength from us when they are feeble,
For strength is immortality
In the blood of children.

This is the sorrow of maturity;
A cleft heart, a yearning forwards and backwards.
Hold! Hold! The years' attrition
Carries away so much of love!
You cannot hold! You too are in procession,
And all behind you younger life is pressing.

Searching the valley for home I observed the roadway
At its beginnings in the wooded foothills.
Thus far upwards I have followed;
I can go no further. I am yet too strong.
For me the way falls back into the valley,
To that other hearth I built there, and that other duty.

Ahead, in the great distance, I saw the old ones:
I called, and they turned and answered:
For a while we shouted to one another
Without understanding, for the wind had risen.

H. V. S. Page

POEM

An orange crescent on a square of yellow,
A shaded smudge cast on a light-flecked plain,
Cruelty tranquil after base mouse-slaughter,
Or a cat asleep in the sun.

Where the essential truth?
Which to portray?

Pattern says: Only the eye! Concentrate colour and shape.
Impression says: Yes, the eye! But concentrate shadow and tone.
Story says: What of the heart? Concentrate moral and symbol.
Photo says: Ah! But the brain! Concentrate object and detail.

Where, then, essential truth?
Which to portray?

Truth says: I am a union of parts,
All parts;
I am the added fractions of the world,
But—and remember my words—
All fractions.
A cat asleep in the sun
is coloured design, but also
a study in tones, but also
callousness ipsissimus, but also

shining whiskers and fur and ears—and also
All of these things in one,
And endlessly more—everything man has ever seen
In a cat asleep in the sun.
Yet, after all,
Only a cat asleep in the sun.
This is ridiculous—
It's only a cat asleep in the sun.

Where, now, essential truth?
Which to portray?

L. Vaughan Thomas

THE SCOTS POETRY COMPETITION

Reading over the entries for this competition has been like a swift tour of Scotland. That slight turn of phrase or spelling which bespeaks the district of origin has led me through the Lothians, Galloway, Lanarkshire, Fifeshire, Aberdeenshire, and even to the Western Isles. What variety and vivacity is added by the tonic values of the Scots tongue! How they add virility and colour, and how naturally, by virtue of their perceptive onomatopoeia, could they be compassed by the comprehension of the Sassenach should he be "gleg in the uptak' "!

While English, largely through the power of the glowing periods of the Bible, has modified and canalized the common tongue of Scotland, the retentions and blendings with the native idiom yield a range and a felicity that is a glory to our joint heritage.

It will be gathered that I am pleased with the entries on this occasion, both for their lyrical quality and their poetic content. Yet, as so often happens when the standard is even, it has been difficult to discover that outstanding poem which inevitably triumphs over its competitors.

America sent a number of nostalgic entries that bridged the miles. One indeed—"This Land I Know", by Margaret MacLaren Dierks—with a simplicity which is the soul of poetry hovered on the heels of success. Her visit to her mother's home where the houses were

Gray with weathering,
Sitting like old, old wives, remembering . . .

flowed on a quiet stream of effective imagery. Edward Borland Ramsey, the Lallans singer from Rutherglen, has distilled two charming lyrics of the countryside with a balance and perception that contains much of the rich humanity of Burns.

O mortal man may seldom bide
Upon the griefs o' brither man,
The eye which gleams wi' morning's pride
Has oft the crowning care to scan.

So I was left with a final choice between Chris Ogilvie for the "Unnamed Isle", telling of a 'Mary Rose' island :

This is an isle enchanted, each new day
Drest in a different garment, yet the same.
They call it after the village, nor dare say
Word of another strange and secret name,

and Celia Randall for "The Flight of the Queen".

There was all of the fey Hebrides in the Island poem, a delicately-woven rhyme pattern and an evaluation of varied line length that was technically adroit. It is therefore only after a mental balancing that I award the prize of £5 to Ulster-born Celia Randall, for the gusto and beat of her poem. The images she has seized with an instinctive awareness have a mounting and contrapuntal effect, while the romantic history and challenge of Scotland is evoked by her lyric overtones.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

THE FLIGHT OF THE QUEEN

Oh, the castle fortress is strong as death,
Though the pennons o' life be blowin' above,
But aye men's hearts are fickle as breath,
An' the king has ta'en anither luve.
The men o' wisdom are fled an' hidin',
The men o' judgment we'll see nae mair;
An' the queen's a-ridin', the queen's a-ridin',
The queen's a-ridin' tae Dunsinair.

O haste ye, haste ye, ye who luve her,
Gae saddle the chestnut, gae saddle the bay,
For owre her pathway the falcons hover,
An' the king's black pikemen will bar her way.
Wi' the moon for licht an' the stars for guidin',
Gae speed wi' the stag an' the mountain hare,
For the queen's a-ridin', the queen's a-ridin',
The queen's a-ridin' tae Dunsinair.

Break through the thicket, the shaw, an' the river,
Bide not for causey, for brig, or for ford,
Let each man's life be a gift to gie her,
An' every han' touch the hilt o' a sword.
Where the king's men gae there is ill betidin',
Where the pikemen hie there is evil there,
An' the queen's a-ridin', the queen's a-ridin',
The queen's a-ridin' tae Dunsinair.

CELIA RANDALL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following subscribers to the Fund inaugurated on the occasion of the retirement of Mr. Galloway Kyle, formerly Director of the Poetry Society, are acknowledged, in addition to the list of names published in previous issues of *The Poetry Review:*

Mrs. P. Proctor; Mrs. L. R. Zortman; Miss E. E. Clements.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: DONATIONS

During 1948 gifts have been received from the following members, and are here gratefully acknowledged:—

William Frankland; S. Gillman-Stannage; N. de Liebhaber-Robson; R. H. D. MacNair; Howard Parsons.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: ANNUAL GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Annual General Business Meeting of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) will be held at the offices of the Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, on Thursday, May 12th, 1949, at 3-0 p.m., to receive the annual financial statement, and elect the general members of the General Council. Names of delegates representing Centres should be sent to the General Secretary not later than April 12th, together with names of the Centre representatives on the General Council.

Admission will be made upon production of membership cards.

Any member who wishes to bring any business before the Annual Meeting must give twenty-eight days' written notice thereof to the General Secretary. Nominations for membership to the General Council must be made by two members of the General Council or three unattached members twenty-eight days prior to the Meeting.

Any member wishing to inspect the audited Statement of Account before the General Business Meeting may do so at this office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Saturdays excepted), or may have a copy sent on application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope after April 30th.

By order of the Council, March 2nd, 1948.

THE POETRY HOUR AT 33 PORTMAN SQUARE, W.1.

Friday, April 8 at 6.15.	*AN EASTER READING* Arranged by the Students of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.
Friday, April 15	Good Friday: No reading.
Friday, April 22 at 6.15.	*JOHN GRADDON* A reading of his poetry.

THE HAMPSTEAD POETRY CENTRE

Programme of Meetings to be held at 9, Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, N.W.3, by invitation of Miss Margaret Huntsman, Hon. Secretary, on first and third Thursdays from 8 to 9.30 p.m.

April 7.	Christian Legends and Phantasies: arranged by Miss E. Vaughan Jenkins.
„ 21.	No Meeting.
May 5.	Percy Bysshe Shelley.
„ 19.	Houses and Gardens.
June 2.	No Meeting.
„ 16.	Poems by Members or any Modern Poets.
July 7.	The Arts.
„ 21.	Favourite Poems.

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE POETRY CENTRE

April 9 2.45 p.m.	A reading by Derek Gilpin Barnes entitled "These I have loved". Mrs. A. F. Fremantle, Greenways, Beacon Hill, Penn.
May 14 2.45 p.m.	*William Cowper.* Mrs. Theodora Roscoe, Horn Hill Court, Chalfont St. Peter. Chalfont St. Giles 5.
May 28 10.0 a.m.	Day Outing by Coach to Stratford-on-Avon for matinee at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.
June 11 2.45 p.m.	A talk on *Contemporary Polish Poets* by Mrs. F. Notley. Mrs. E. Ward, Kynance, Manor Road. Penn. 2177.
July 9 2.45 p.m.	*Poems of 20th Century,* with introduction by Miss E. D. Bangay. Mrs. I. D. Singer, Copse Hill, Kingswood Road. Penn. 2176.

THE MAIDSTONE CENTRE

Spring Session, 1949

All meetings except that of May 27th will be held in The Library, Maidstone Grammar School, Barton Road. Meetings will start at 7.30 p.m.

Friday, 29th April	E. W. & M. Edmonds: "Review of a Decade, 1939-48".
Friday, 13th May	Annual General Meeting, followed by Play Reading: Macneice's "The Dark Tower".
Friday, 27th May	At the Maidstone College of Art, Museum Street. R. A. Richardson, A.R.C.A.: "The Poetry and Painting of William Blake".

Will anyone able and willing to start a Centre in any part of the country please communicate with the Secretary, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges or private individuals.

AUDITIONS COMMITTEE

Miss E. M. Cattell
Miss K. Cracroft (Gen. Sec. & Registrar)
T. H. Foley
John Graddon (*ex-officio*)
Leigh Henry, Ph. D.
John Holgate
Miss M. Lyon
E. Guy Pertwee
T. W. Ramsey, F.R.S.L. (*ex-officio*)
Miss R. Shuttleworth

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITIONS FOR 1949

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize," 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*.

Closing date, is 31st December, 1949.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the offer of £10 in prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 15th May, 1949.

THE HOWARD PARSONS EPIGRAM COMPETITION

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes, endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas; 2nd prize, 2 guineas; 3rd prize, 1 guinea. Entries which should not have been previously published should be marked "Epigram" and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope, as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1950. The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

THE POETRY SOCIETY JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION

The Poetry Society have pleasure in announcing an annual Junior Verse Competition. Schools throughout the country are invited to co-operate in submitting the work of their pupils.

The Competition will be divided into two classes:

(*a*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age up to thirteen years last birthday. There will be a book prize inscribed by the Poetry Society.

(*b*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age from fourteen to seventeen years last birthday. There will be a book prize, inscribed by the Poetry Society and four additional prizes of one year's Membership to the Poetry Society.

The poem may be on any subject. Closing date, 30th June, 1949. Entries to be addressed to: The Junior Verse Competition, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear the names and addresses of competitors and copies should be retained as these cannot be returned.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1949

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing the third Annual Competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject. One of the two forms adopted by Lord Alfred Douglas in his sonnets, must be used; these are:

For the Octave — 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1
For the Sextet — 3, 4, 5; 3, 4, 5 *or* 3, 4; 3, 4; 3, 4

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely marked "Sonnet." Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1949. Address "Sonnet Competition," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

POEMS OF PLACE COMPETITION FOR 1950

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems, previously unpublished, of not more than 100 lines. All entries should be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author; poems should be addressed to "The Holmes Prize," The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than 1st April, 1950. The judges may divide the prize money at their discretion, and the winning poem or poems may be published in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors are asked to keep copies of their entries as these cannot be returned.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S CRITICAL SERVICE

The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing the continuance of its Critical Service. Two poems only may be submitted for criticism, for a minimum fee of 5s. The charge for the criticism of each additional poem is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.